

CHARTIST

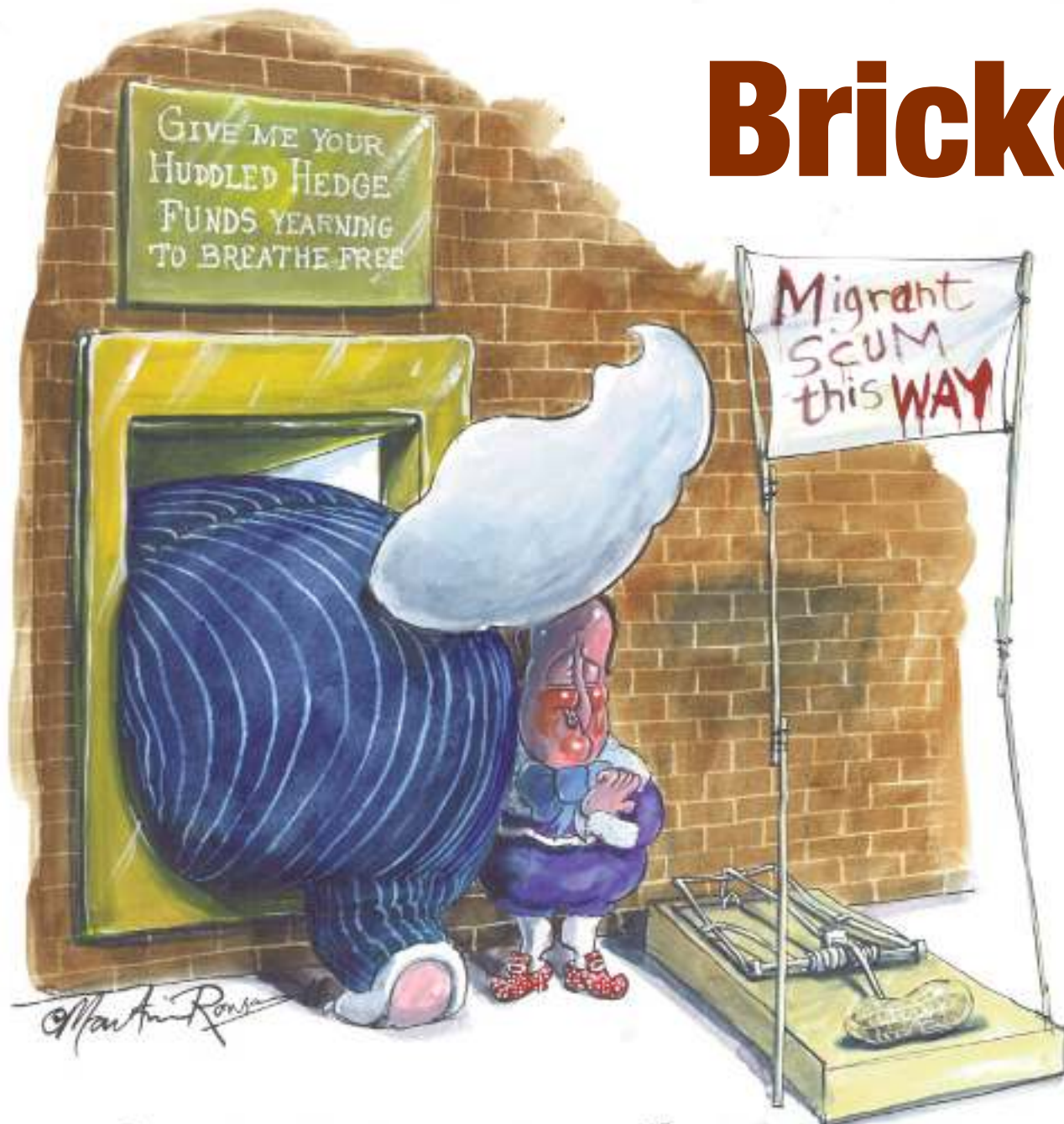
For democratic socialism

March/April 2016

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ISSUE

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Claude Moraes MEP **EU Dr Jacky Davis** **Junior Doctors** **Dave Cunningham**
US Democrats **Karen Buck MP** **Housing** **Cat Smith MP** **Palestinian children**
Don Flynn **Fear and loathing** **plus Greenwatch, Youth View, and reviews**

CHARTIST

Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Peter Chalk, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, David Floyd, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, Tehmina Kazi, Peter Kenyon (Treasurer), Frank Lee, Dave Lister, Andy Morton (Website Editor), Mary Southcott, James Grayson, Patricia d'Ardenne, Sheila Osmanovic and Patrick Mulcahy. Production: Peter Kenyon.

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Editorial Policy

The editorial policy of CHARTIST is to promote debate amongst people active in radical politics about the contemporary relevance of democratic socialism across the spectrum of politics, economics, science, philosophy, art, interpersonal relations – in short, the whole realm of social life.

Our concern is with both democracy and socialism. The history of the last century has made it abundantly clear that the mass of the population of the advanced capitalist countries will have no interest in any form of socialism which is not thoroughly democratic in its principles, its practices, its morality and its ideals. Yet the consequences of this deep attachment to democracy – one of the greatest advances of our epoch – are seldom reflected in the discussion and debates amongst active socialists.

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

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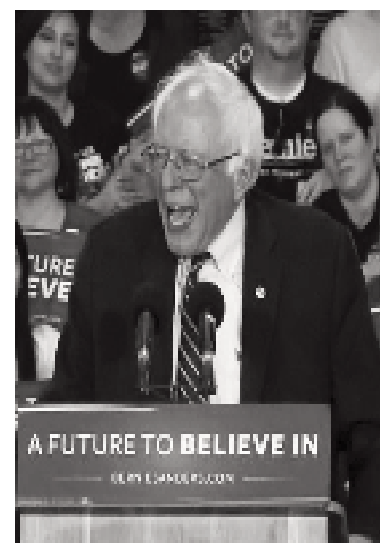
Frank Lee offers a sober view of the latest stock market gyrations



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Feel the Bern pages 21-23 plus Youth View



Cover by Martin Rowson

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WESTMINSTER VIEW

Karen Buck MP exposes the Tory housing agenda

Labour must reach out

If Labour is to be a more effective party we need to be clearer than we have been about the role of a political party. This thought was prompted by a sentence in the Editorial for *Chartist* 278: “the big challenge is to reach out beyond Labour’s growing membership, to the millions of voters at the sharp end of Tory policies”. Even if that challenge were to be met, that is the way to failure – at least as far as elections are concerned. The real challenge, if we wish to win elections, is the much more difficult one of reaching the people who feel they have gained.

Labour needs to learn from its failings in the last election. In 2015 the LP sounded more like a pressure group campaigning for the disadvantaged, rather than a party hoping to build a future for the country. A Party has to be more than the voice of a segment of the population. That route may be possible in a system with extreme proportional representation but in most electoral systems

a Party has to be able to create a coalition of interests, either by cobbling together a set of policies for a mix of groups or by creating a common project.

The LP needs to be able to speak to people in the middle of the income distribution, around £30,000. It needs them to believe that the LP represents them, not just the disadvantaged. A Party (as opposed to a campaign) cannot rely on altruism. What Labour says needs to be relevant to their situation.

It can offer some consolation after defeat to believe that the loss is simply because supporters did not turn out. Thinking that there is already a latent support fuels the belief that all we need is a more inspiring leader to mobilise that support. But that is not enough.

One of the most startling statistics that emerged after the last election is that of the 100 seats with the lowest turnout 91 have Labour MPs. Corbyn’s campaign may have mobilised the dis-

enchanted, but campaigns to increase voter registration and turnout are unlikely to provide Labour with new seats. It would for the most part just increase Labour majorities. To unseat Tory MPs we need to win over people who voted for the Conservatives.

The people ‘at the sharp end’ do not form a majority. What is more, they are disproportionately in areas that already have Labour representatives. We have to, perhaps reluctantly, acknowledge that a majority of households are better off than they were in 2010 (at least in the Conservative areas) and that many feel they have benefited from Conservative government. It is to some of those people that we have to reach out. For a start, Labour needs to project more collectivist approaches.

PAUL TEASDALE
EXETER

Nuclear power: Token dissent and discussion

Just what is Dave Toke (*Chartist* 278, Letter) angry about? Equality? The Paris 2015 COP outcome? Tax avoidance? No, he’s angry at the possibility of *Chartist* airing different views on nuclear power (claiming I called for a debate) rather than parroting the Green Party line. Far be it for me to question Dr. Toke’s knowledge on this subject, but he doesn’t provide much firm evidence.

In *Greenwatch* 277 and the online Blog I asked for readers’ views on coverage rather than on actual issues, though of course in a discussion magazine views on issues are always welcome. I deliberately avoided pre-judging the issues of fracking or nuclear power (and GM crops in the blog). For the record I am extremely sceptical about them all. I am just reluctant to rule them out in all respects for ever. To do so would be intellectually and therefore politically dishonest. The cases for them need to be aired even if they are rejected. I would like to see *Chartist* challenging received wisdom, lazy slogans and dogmas from the left and greens, maybe

even more than the ‘easy’ targets of the Tories and old/Blairite Labour.

Greenwatch and *Chartist* are not the property of any person or viewpoint. Editorial policy does not explicitly mention the environment, though I’d like to see it mentioned as integral to our politics.

I said that while readers probably share a general political outlook this is not so likely on environmental issues. In the Labour movement we seek to inform there is still overwhelming support for growth with few reservations, whereas the scope for ‘green growth’ (global economic development and rising living standards whilst capping or even reducing carbon emissions), and even the necessity of growth, is challenged by ecological economists such as Tim Jackson.

The 2014 report *Mending the Fractured Economy* led by Andrew Adonis for the Labour Party, does not mention the word green, and environment appears only in the phrase ‘enabling environment for economic growth’.

Prominent Trade Unions such

as Unite are strongly and uncritically in favour of nuclear power and the TUC supports ‘new build nuclear power stations’ as part of ‘a “balanced” energy policy’.

So we have a long way to go.

In October 2015 the TUC and Greenpeace issued a report on a low carbon economy, *Green Collar Nation*, which starts to address the tension here. It acknowledges differences: the TUC supports London airport expansion subject to environmental controls and of course Greenpeace strongly opposes it.

One reason many green socialists are still in the Labour Party is that although it is easier to talk to those who agree with us it is more important to talk to those who do not. So the door is open: we need to widen the discussion out beyond green groups and academia to branches and members in an accessible but informed way. Surely that is what *Chartist* is all about?

NIGEL DOGGETT
EAST SUSSEX

EU: Vote IN for Internationalism

A deep fissure runs through the Tory party. Cameron has his European ‘reforms’ and unsurprisingly has launched the ‘in’ campaign with a referendum date of 23 June. Corbyn’s team is clear Labour will be campaigning for continued UK membership. But not by endorsing the narrow anti-migrant, pro-big business drum the government will be beating.

Labour has scope to exploit the divisions in the Tory party with at least seven Cabinet members openly campaigning for Brexit. Leader of the Commons Chris Grayling, Justice secretary and Cameron chum Michael Gove, with Iain Duncan Smith and retiring London Tory Mayor Boris Johnson most prominent of those lining up to contradict their own leader.

But it is vital in rubbing salt into Tory wounds that Labour maintains an independent united campaign of its own putting the socialist case for membership, as argued by **Claude Moraes MEP** in this issue. There must be no repeat of the ‘Better Together’ Scottish debacle of Labour joining with Tories.

The left case for Europe is much more powerful than the narrow, one-sided free market mantra of the Cameron camp. Labour needs to start from basics. Globalisation is the problem. Google, Apple, Amazon and the big banks reveal this in their tax avoiding and border hopping antics. The corporations have been having a free ride on the backs of working people across Europe and the world. A regional EU block with nation states pooling sovereignty, working together to tackle the exploitation of the supra national corporations is an elementary necessity in 21st century. In this context nation states are almost irrelevant.

Nations alone are increasingly irrelevant when it comes to effective action on the environment, social and immigration policies as **Don Flynn** argues in this issue. Major social and workplace gains have been made through the EU from working time, workplace health and safety and paid leave, free health care and more. Although under attack from the neoliberal alliance currently dominant in the EU, the austerity route is neither inevitable nor working. A different Europe is possible and achievable. It is one to be fought for with partners in Europe. It is the course the Greek government have striven for rather than the national road.

Nationalism and the rise of the new fascism is the growing menace that stalks Europe. It is beholden on all international socialists to stand against this tide that seeks to take Europe back to the 1930s of rival nation states, of barbed wire borders, of mean minded xenophobia. The threat is palpable in France as **Andrew Coates** explains in analysing the gains of Le Pen’s Front National. France is not alone in having nationalist bullies and racists emerging from the shadows. Hungary and Poland have many in government, while the extreme nationalists in Denmark, Sweden and Holland have established foot-holds.

Those leftists, including Tariq Ali and Lindsey German of Stop the War who claim the EU is ‘irrevocably committed to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership’ or irreversibly committed to privatisation, welfare cuts, low wages and the erosion of trade union rights’ are wrong. It is a counsel of despair equivalent to saying we cannot reverse these retrograde measures in Britain either. They are not irrevocable. Only class struggle will tell if they can be rolled back. Better to roll them back as part of a European movement than isolated in Britain. It is essentially a political issue. Tories running the British parliament is not inevitable, nor is neo-liberalism in the driving seat in the EU.

Any concessions to the nationalist right on Europe are dangerous. In Britain this means UKIP and the Tory right-wing zealots. Joining platforms with racists like Nigel Farage, as George Galloway has done, can only serve the cause of the ‘Little England’ nationalists. With desperate migrants fleeing war and poverty European wide action providing refuge and assistance is essential.

Perhaps the biggest refugee group, certainly the longest-standing in the Middle East are the Palestinians. **Jon Taylor** and **Cat Smith MP** highlight the plight of Palestinians struggling for a homeland against increasingly repressive Israeli policies. **Sarah Cope** highlights the inhumane treatment of migrants in Britain’s home-grown detention centre at Yarls Wood.

While the Corbyn led Labour Party provides hope for working people in Britain on the other side of the pond Bernie Sanders has been making waves in the contest to secure the Democratic nomination for president. **Paul Garver** and **Dave Cunningham** analyse the rise of the Vermont senator and why he provides a real challenge to the dynastic centrism of Hilary Clinton and the Tea Party Republican fundamentalism of Donald Trump.

But it is the battle for hearts and minds in Britain that will dominate the political terrain over the next few months. **Karen Buck MP** explains how if Labour’s Sadiq Khan can get across a positive message on housing with a new vision of London he has every chance of winning the mayoralty. **Sian Errington** reminds us that that the struggle against austerity enters a new phase as Osborne’s cuts dig deeper into the social fabric while **Dr Jacky Davis** explains why junior doctors are in the frontline of the defending the NHS.

Meanwhile as stock markets tumble, China’s economy slows and Chancellor Osborne’s quack medicine for the economy is failing in even its own deficit reduction targets **Frank Lee** highlights the fault lines in the global economy.

Corbyn’s Labour could begin to breach the Tory walls in London and on Europe. But it must get its organisation right and allow the breath of grass roots democracy to blow through the Party argues **Peter Kenyon**. A new vision and a new politics could begin to sink some roots if Labour can take its opportunities.

A new vision
and a new politics
could begin to sink
some roots if Labour
can take its
opportunities

Trident: a dated technology?

Nigel Doggett ponders macho technology and alternatives

Labour's new shadow defence secretary Emily Thornberry's remark that Trident could become as obsolete as the Spitfire reminded me of an historic issue. The World War II Spitfire was arguably less significant in the Battle of Britain than the more basic Hurricane, which was cheaper to build and maintain and responsible for shooting down more enemy planes. As Dave Toke stated in the last edition of *Chartist*, there is a British (mostly male) love of high technology projects that has run through nuclear power, Polaris, Concorde and Trident to the proposed HS2 and Hinkley C nuclear power station. Simon Jenkins repeatedly reminds us in the *Guardian* newspaper that this can cause governments to disregard any rational consideration of cost. A thought for our defence-minded MPs: the most advanced technology can be the least practical and worst value for money.

That is not to be Luddite or anti-technology, as some green or socially radical viewpoints may appear. Sometimes it's too easy to favour low technology because of its political/cultural associations. A proper socialist alternative would be based on Appropriate Technology, orientated towards the needs of people and communities, as championed by EF Schumacher. His 1973 book *Small is Beautiful* should be essential reading for anyone interested in green economics.

Observing Jeremy Corbyn's contortions as he sought to reconcile the protection of jobs with opposition to Trident reveals the shallowness of much technology policy discussion. The idea of keeping a form of submarine purely to provide employment is absurd, particularly when we badly need to develop technology to address environmental challenges. Well over forty years ago the Lucas Aerospace Plan was produced by workers including Mike Cooley, showing the scope for conversion from military to socially useful and environmental products (see the October 2009 article on a Green New Deal in *Red Pepper*, available online). Cooley's fascinating book *Architect or Bee: The Human Price of Technology* (just republished by Spokesman Books) details their imaginative proposals for solar and wind power, hybrid engines and battery packs for electric cars. Tragically there was but a limited adoption of these in the UK. Many of the skills used to produce weapons today could be transferred to green tech-

nology such as turbines, smart grids and control systems (see Andrew Smith in *Chartist* 278).

The radicalism of the 1970s and 1980s needs to resurface again in Labour and the trade unions.

Fixing the Climate

More examples of high technomania can be seen in some proposals to reverse the effects of human-made climate change, known as geo-engineering. These range from the mundane - reforestation, with gradual long term effects, through seeding the oceans with iron to promote plant growth, to the wacky - mirrors in deserts or reflectors in space to reduce solar radiation. These have been misleadingly likened to natural processes: spraying of sulphur dioxide to promote cloud formations as akin to volcanoes, and any form of carbon dioxide conversion as 'artificial trees', even though the mechanism would be totally different.

Though proponents stress that the most drastic measures should only be used as a last resort such grand schemes have a siren call which appeals to certain high tech entrepreneurs (see my review of Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* in *Chartist* 272).

The uncertainties involved in many of these schemes would be enormous. As with any mega project in a new field there is a danger of vastly underestimating costs (known as 'optimism bias'). They would also be hard to stop for fear of the climate effects of greenhouse gases returning with a vengeance.

Even if such measures were successful in taming climate change, there would be a risk of provoking regional droughts or floods. Critics cite the danger of resulting international disputes (whilst low lying and tropical countries are set to be hard hit by global warming, Russia and Canada might welcome it to boost their agricultural potential).

In the short term, work on geo-engineering plans could divert resources from the necessary multi-faceted development for the transition to a green economy. In the longer term, however, it will be necessary to somehow reduce the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to safer levels. I still wouldn't rule out every idea but in the field of climate change, as Professor David Mackay states "it is the last thing we should think about".

add for printer

The Sanders' revolution

Patty McCabe on the youth pull of Bernie Sanders

Bernie Sanders declared after his victory in New Hampshire democratic primary: "Together we have sent a message that will resonate from Wall Street to Washington ... that government belongs to all of the people". He beat his rival Hilary Clinton with nearly 60% of the vote. Yet it is the votes of the young that are most prevalent. In the Iowa entrance poll, he crushed Clinton by an extraordinary six to one—84 percent to 14 percent—among voters younger than 30.

Just what is it about Sanders' politics that makes him so attractive to young votes? Is it as simple as the fact that his policies are very appealing to young people? He wants to help and encourage students rather than cripple them with debt and he is one of the few candidates who is tackling climate change head on, a cause that is much more popular amongst the younger than the older generations. Nor is the answer to be found in his charisma, although he is clearly a brilliant speaker. It is also not accurate to argue that his policies are new. Sanders' politics are not new and certainly not new for him. His fight against Wall Street and the big corporations is one that he has waged for the past 50 years. So why is he suddenly so popular?

The answer is to be found in the fact that the essential message behind Sanders' politics is not of

change but of revolution. The idea that things could and should be different now. In the face of Sanders' unflinching attack on the status quo, Clinton's political pragmatism seems boring and not worth the effort. Her ties with Wall Street also put her in a class that has been discredited in recent years and provides voters with reason to doubt her integrity. Whereas Clinton's reference to feminism and minorities sounds like she is touting old tickets,

Sanders' willingness to tackle issues that transgress identity politics are a revival of the traditional left, one that believed that injustice was common to all, not to individual groups.

Sanders, at the potentially over-ripe old age of seventy four, was hardly the most obvious candidate for the youth vote of America. Corbyn was not the most likely candidate to capture the imagination of young people in Britain. What their popularity does suggest is that their 'old politics' are resonating with the problems faced by young people and a frustration with, and rejection of, mainstream politics.

Unfortunately, this frustration with politics has also provided his political opposite, Donald Trump, with most of his supporters. What is happening in America is a search for a more aggressive political narrative that rejects the view the status quo is either something inevitable, or that it is something that can only be changed gradually.

'Old politics' are resonating with the problems faced by young people

OUR HISTORY - 65

Douglas Cole - Social Theory (1920)



Douglas Cole (better known as G.D.H. Cole) was a political scientist and historian. A libertarian socialist, he was active in the Fabian Society and the Co-operative movement. He wrote a series of studies of the trade union movement, including the classic *Self-Government in Industry* in 1917 and was sympathetic to syndicalism. He was one of the founders of the National Guilds League, and in 1920 published *Guild Socialism Restated*. *Social Theory*, also published in 1920, was a more theoretical statement of his ideological position. Cole published over 50 political books and pamphlets, as well as hundreds of essays. The select bibliography in Anthony Wright's excellent 1979 study of Cole and *Socialist Democracy* includes over 600 items. Cole also wrote the seven volume *History of Socialist Thought*, which traces the development of socialist thought on an international scale between 1789 and 1939 and which treats Marxism and anarchism as equally valid tendencies within the socialist tradition, and which concludes with a restatement of Cole's own libertarian socialist position. In 1944, Cole was appointed professor of political theory at Oxford University and was the mentor of a generation of socialist intellectuals and politicians. Together with his wife Margaret, Cole also wrote some thirty

detective stories.

"I assume that the object of social organisation is not merely material efficiency, but also essentially the fullest self-expression of all the members. I assume that self-expression involves self-government, and that we ought to aim not merely at giving people votes, but at calling forth their full participation in the common direction of the affairs of the community.

If it is contended that men only ask for peace and quietness, and do not want to govern themselves, I answer in the first place that this is not true, and secondly, that if it was true, we ought not to acquiesce in such a state of affairs, but to alter it as speedily as possible. It has been assumed throughout this book that human beings have wills, and that they have a right and duty to use these wills to their full capacity in the direction of Society. ... The time for a new and definitive social theory is not yet; but it is high time for our generation to set about laying the foundations of a theory more responsive to modern development than that which at present holds sway. Orthodox social theory is bankrupt: it neither corresponds to the facts of today nor affords any help in interpreting the tendencies which are shaping a new social order within the old."

Labour Party organisation : chaotic

Peter Kenyon remains bewildered by the absence of a membership recruitment and retention strategy

How many Labour members, supporters or affiliates have never received a welcome by their local Labour Party? I doubt it. With membership renewal for those who joined in the wake of last year's general election defeat just a few months away, that is a terrifying reality. The right will be ready to pounce if we are not careful. Labour's leader Jeremy Corbyn is credited with being the primary catalyst for a near doubling of membership last summer. How many will renew? And at what cost?

Labour's members are the first line in the defence of democratic socialism from the onslaughts of a mainly tax-dodging, foreign owned media. Nurturing, growing and encouraging activism to win elections ought to be the central objective of Labour's paid staff, and lay officials. It isn't, as the dismal naval gazing about the 2015 Westminster parliament election makes clear – if only by omission. No, that is unfair. The Labour Party official inquiry entitled *Learning the lessons from defeat taskforce report* led by Margaret Beckett MP cites the word 'members' 11 times in 35 pages. And in the concluding section on Communications, the taskforce says: "We should endeavour to find ways to use the opportunities presented by our vastly increased membership to provide intelligence which can supplement what we learn from opinion polling and add this to our understanding of what most concerns our fellow citizens."

Disdain

I suppose that could be seen as a start. But it is symptomatic of blinkered disdain of members from the Westminster village. That is echoed all too vividly in local Labour Party organisation as described by my colleague Duncan Bowie in the next piece in this issue of *Chartist*. Other reports into the wreckage of a campaign such as those by Jon Cruddas MP and pollster Deborah Mattinson focussed on messaging and voters, rather

than talking to them in the first place and having proper conversations.

Another Corbyn-led insurgency is required to galvanise the party machine into trumpeting 'Members – welcome here'. The price has got to be right too. It was possible until the end of 2015 to recruit a member locally for £15 for the first year. At the stroke of a sub-editor's blue pencil, it has gone. The online Join by Post option in minuscule print at the bottom of the Join Labour website page has been edited. Last year – Recruited by a member of your local Labour Party – £1.25 per month (Join for £15). This year – gone. I asked general secretary, Iain McNicol why? Answer was there none.

Why does this matter? For the first time in living memory, one person – Jeremy Corbyn – offered people a genuine alternative model of political leadership and converted it into party members in a matter of weeks. Sustaining that alternative as the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to give Corbyn his official parliamentary title, is proving a challenge. Blue-sky political musing by Corbyn – Trident subs without missiles, or sharing sovereignty of the Maldives with Argentina were self-indulgent gifts to Labour's political opponents.

Redouble membership

A campaign is needed to redouble Labour's membership. Those members need to be encouraged to engage in meaningful conversations that will glean intelligence and help convert millions of the electorate into actual and committed Labour Party voters. Any illusions about that having been achieved during the 2015 campaign were dashed by the result. For the avoidance of doubt, I recommend Iain Watson's *Five Million Conversations – How Labour lost an election and rediscovered its roots* and my review in this issue of *Chartist*. The fresh resurgence is needed to see off the naysayers plotting Corbyn's downfall, and to engender and sustain hope for millions of Labour voters that there is an

2015

Labour Party Membership

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE LABOUR PARTY

Membership Rates

- Standard rate – £3.00 per month (£36.00 per year)
- Aged 14-25 – £1 per month (£12 per year)
- Aged 23-25 – £1 per month (£12 per year)
- Unwaged – £1.00 per month (£12 per year)
- Serving or former member of the British Armed Forces – join for £1
- Widow/Orphan
- Recruited by a member of your local Labour Party – £1.25 per month (join for £15)

How much should I pay? (By according to your name/you can check it on the 3rd page of the site)

2016

Labour Party Membership

JOIN 2016

Yes, I would like to join the Labour Party

Membership rates

Standard rate	£3.92/month	(£47/year)
Reduced*	£1.95/month	(£23.40/year)
Veteran	£1/year	
Under 27	£1/month	(£12/year)
Youth	£1/year	
Student	£1/year	

Spot the difference: Recruited by a member of your local Labour Party (Join for £15) abandoned?

alternative to Tory Austerity, poverty wages and unaffordable homes, whether to rent or buy. No one would be under any illusions about the difficulties of achieving electability whoever is leader.

Personally, I have long regarded mass membership as an essential strategy for a party opposed to the vested interests dominating modern day society aka capitalism. It's a way to counter hostile media headlines. Understanding 'which side your bread is buttered' as everyone who has a Gran knows is part of our culture. But for the Labour Party today there is an added imperative. Tory dogma is being enshrined in law that means Labour will lose £6 - £8m of funding a year from its founding affiliated trade unions. That should be used as a fresh catalyst to recruit and retain those whose membership is due for renewal this summer. Now that we know the date for the EU referendum, that provides another opportunity to re-energise then and pull in more of the 99ers.

Peter Kenyon is chair of City of London Branch Labour Party and a former member of Labour's NEC

Opening up the Party...maybe

Duncan Bowie on local barriers to new Labour Party members

There has been a dramatic increase in the Labour Party's membership over the last few months and it is interesting to consider how the Party has or has not adjusted. Many new members joined to support Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign. Some new members are young, but others are actually returnees, some of whom went into exile during the Blair years, or specifically following Blair's support for the Iraq war.

Many of these older members have been politically active in organisations outside the Labour Party, though the number of these returners who have been active members of ultra left parties may perhaps have been somewhat exaggerated. The fears of an ultra left takeover remains strong in some LP circles and there is a risk that measures to stop a perceived takeover risk excluding newer members who are previously unaffiliated but keen to get involved. It is somewhat ironic that these members who are supportive of the new party leadership are actually seen as a threat to the party, while in practice the threat is much greater from the centre right of the party which is hostile to the new leadership and Corbyn specifically and is actively trying to divide the party and oust the leader.

My own constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood, represented in parliament for 23 years by Tessa Jowell, is an interesting example. The party is somewhat centrist having supported Jowell and for the last twenty years or so has not seen itself as a focus for political debate or policy making. The conference delegate was sent off without a mandate and used to report back on how much fun they had had and who they had met. Rather different from my time as conference delegate when I was armed with a constituency policy book and had to justify my every vote. The constituency party however still sees itself primarily as an electoral machine to win elections and protect its MP, the competent and professional Helen Hayes, and is struggling to

respond to pressure from new members to have political discussions and actually pass policy motions. For the last few years, monthly meetings of the constituency party were generally attended by about 30-40 people.

The influx of new members has however changed the tone of the meetings – with up to 120 members attending, of whom only half are delegates. The CLP executive's response to this increasing interest however was to restrict contributions to debates to delegates. The first meeting under the new rules was therefore dominated by new members and some older non-delegate members complaining that they were being excluded from the discussion. A walk out of angry members was only narrowly avoided. The atmosphere became somewhat unpleasant. Local Momentum groups have now been established, with well attended meetings in pubs and community cen-

A walk out of angry members was only narrowly avoided. The atmosphere became somewhat unpleasant

tres – the Southwark Momentum meeting on housing I attended had over 50 people present and had an excellent discussion. The new activists are unlikely to be content with being marginalised from mainstream debate within the party and are also open to the influence of the ultra-left returnees/would be returnees – Socialist Party activists and former Workers Liberty and TUSC parliamentary candidates were vocal.

Part of the new politics relates to party members' opposition to some of the funding decisions made by the councils in recent budget setting – in Lambeth there is strong community opposition to library closures and reduction in parks staff. In Southwark, concerns over cuts to local services. Both boroughs are also caught in controversies over estate regeneration schemes.



Momentum: threat or opportunity to new politics in the Labour Party?

There is also a repeat of the clashes of 2001 with members seeking to debate policy on Syria and Trident. Several wards ruled out of order motions opposing bombing of Syria on the grounds that members had not given 14 days notice, although Cameron did not give parliament 14 days notice of the vote on war. The MP voted against the bombing, only to find that emergency motions to support her position after the event were also ruled out of order on the basis that the parliamentary vote had already taken place. The CLP however narrowly passed an anti Trident motion. The use of rules (which most party members did not know existed) to stifle debate has at times been Kafkaesque.

We need to recognise that members have different views and enthusiasms, and that every new contribution is not necessarily part of a takeover conspiracy. A doubling of membership should be seen as an opportunity and not a threat. I have spoken to wards in other CLPs recently and some wards are much more welcoming of new members – having a good political discussion in a ward meeting of 50 or so of all ages, or in a CLP meeting of 100 or more, can be enjoyable and productive. Slowly even my own ward is getting there – we now have monthly meetings of 20-30 people and political discussions. So onwards and upwards – the Labour Party is changing, but it can be a slow and somewhat frustrating process.

Resist and renew

Sian Errington on meeting the challenge of Tory austerity

In February The Guardian revealed that from a £300 million 'relief fund' to help local councils struggling with the scale of funding cuts demanded of them 83% of the funds will go to Conservative run councils. The five most deprived local authorities in the country – Middlesbrough, Liverpool, Manchester, Knowsley and Hull – also Labour run, have suffered some of the deepest cuts and will receive nothing at all. In the same week Jeremy Hunt imposed a new, cost cutting and unsafe contract on NHS junior doctors, the ever escalating housing crisis was the focus of Jeremy Corbyn's questions to Cameron at PMQs and John McDonnell finished the week with a packed meeting in Sheffield, telling the audience that "I think Sheffield is going to play a central role in the future of our economy, but it needs investment...we have argued for a long period of time about the rebalancing of our economy, both in terms of between the finance sector and manufacturing, we have also argued for a geographical rebalancing as well, and that's not occurred under this government...our whole thrust around areas like Sheffield is about investment in skills... in infrastructure and ...in new technology". It was a week in which a spotlight shone on the dramatic contrast in what the Conservative government is currently executing on the overwhelming majority of people, and the much brighter future that could be won with Labour.

As we approach the March Budget it is likely that Osborne

will blame the slowing British economy on external forces – security concerns, the Chinese, the Europeans – anything but his own failed economic policies. The growth in real GDP slowed to 1.9% in the last quarter of 2015 – a decline from 3% growth in the middle of 2014. The economy had been seeing a short Tory boom – a boost to consumption that proved sufficient to help ride the government through the general election but is now fading. Despite the proven track record of deep austerity policies causing the economy to slow significantly – in 2010 the economic growth rate slipped from 2% to 1% - Osborne has made it clear that these are the policies he is going to re-inflict on the country.

The failure of these economic policies to produce sustainable growth that can be the source of better public services, better wages and better living standards for all means that measures to politically insulate Conservative MPs from the human cost of this failure are needed. The extra £300 million for particular local councils was miraculously found after up to 30 Conservative MPs threatened to revolt against the local government finance settlement. The re-drawing of Westminster constituency boundaries should also be viewed in this light.

And to be clear, the economic failure of Cameron and Osborne is counted in human cost. Recent TUC analysis has shown that real wages are still worth £2,270 less than in 2008 - the result of a seven year fall in living standards that is impacting on all but the

very wealthiest to some degree. Insecure, precarious and low paid work has increased – scarring sectors where women predominant such as social care, cleaning, catering and hospitality, but spreading across the economy, leaving more and more struggling to make ends meet and with little autonomy over when and where they work. Then there are the deaths now tragically associated with our shredded benefits system and the rise in homelessness. In January research revealed that violence against women had increased since 2009 with 'reduced economic independence of women and the impact of the cuts to services on which women disproportionately depend', being key factors. Measures such as the Gagging Act, the Trade Union Bill, the Snoopers Charter and others seek to curb and constrain peoples' ability to organise, protest and take action to defend and improve their lives.

The election of Jeremy Corbyn to the Labour leadership and his appointment of John McDonnell is an opportunity to forge a real alternative to austerity. His call for a geographical rebalancing of the economy to spread wealth and decent work, as well as becoming less reliant on the financial sector, put the need for investment front and centre. Investing in projects such as house building, public transport and technology can not only meet urgent social needs – for example, providing genuinely affordable homes for social rent, ensuring people can travel around the country easily to visit friends, family and for business with minimal environmental impact – but such investment is the necessary underpinning for sustainable economic growth. Growth which can then be used to fund the NHS, education, and many other public services and social security at a level that the country needs and deserves – with poverty and inequality made to fall, not increase. Popularising these policies, demonstrating that Labour can win with a message and plans that can transform the lives of millions of ordinary people for the better is the challenge ahead.

Sian Errington is a member of the Labour Assembly Against Austerity steering group



Junior doctors are revolting!

Jacky Davis on how the Tories are risking patient lives

For the first time since the 1970's junior doctors in the NHS have taken industrial action in protest against an imposed contract they say is unfair and unsafe. The Government claims that a new contract is needed to fulfil its manifesto promise to deliver a 'truly 7 day NHS'.

Junior doctors say the contract would:

- force doctors to work longer and later with fewer safeguards, compromising patient safety
- penalise those who take time out to have a family or work part time
- offer an 11% pay rise, undermined by a drop in pay for working antisocial hours
- provide pay that starts below the national median (doctors-£21,000, not including registration, legal protection, insurance and exam costs; ASDA managers: £22,000)

Monday to Saturday

The government proposes that new normal working hours should be from 7 am – 10 pm Monday to Saturday. The reduction of hours that attract extra pay is a red line in the sand because government can redefine them for junior doctors and all other NHS staff too.

Hunt and Cameron have used their 'manifesto promise' of a 24/7 NHS to justify their imposition of the contract. But, we already have a 24/7 NHS. No-one is sent home with a burst appendix on a Sunday afternoon, and most clinical staff work out of hours to provide emergency and urgent care, as Hunt was reminded by the twitter storm #ImInWorkJeremy.

Government has refused to define 'a truly 7 day NHS,' but indicated that they want routine care available seven days a week. Pilot studies show that patients don't want this and the NHS certainly can't afford it. Routine care requires doctors, support staff, nurses, radiographers, technicians, porters, and administration, and would mean stretching an

overextended service from five days to seven.

A new contract for junior doctors is not needed to improve out of hours (OOH) care. Emergency and urgent OOH care always needs improving. But the devolved nations are not imposing this contract and some English NHS Trusts have already improved their OOH care without a new contract.

Cameron and Hunt have repeatedly misquoted statistics about increased mortality and weekend admissions, despite being publicly reprimanded by the authors of the paper they quoted, and by the editor of the *British Medical Journal*. A leaked document from Hunt's own department says there is no evidence to link staffing levels and increased deaths of patients admitted at the weekend. But these misleading claims about the dangers of weekend admissions mean that 53% of the public are now afraid of going to hospital out of hours, itself a dangerous and potentially lethal state of affairs. If Hunt wanted to improve patient safety he would sit down with staff, get their views and help, and then enact their recommendations on safe staffing levels.

Government's accusation

As for the government's accusation that junior doctors have been misled by their 'irresponsible' union - many will have years of experience on the wards, young families to consider, and have an excellent understanding of their contracts. Of the 76% who voted, 98% supported industrial action, an overwhelming majority (the Tories won their election with a vote of 36.7% on a 66% turnout).

Hunt has accused junior doctors of putting patients in danger but while they have been striking patient care is being provided by Consultants and associated specialists. Yes, some patients will have had their operations postponed, but no one has mentioned that an under-reported 70,000



Junior doctors out on the streets after working excessive hours

operations were cancelled in 2015, due to NHS underfunding, bed shortages, lack of staff and theatre time.

Cameron and Hunt have now taken their own 'nuclear option' and imposed their contract without any consensus - a new first, which alienates medical staff and could affect recruitment and retention. Fourteen out of 20 Trust CEOs have already rescinded their previous support for the Secretary of State. Meanwhile Hunt – while claiming to have an open door – has dodged numerous invitations to state his case with doctors themselves. A recent ticketed event was hurriedly moved elsewhere. Junior doctors who found it were screened out at the door, a damning indictment of a Health Secretary, afraid to face his own clinicians.

Attack on the NHS

The fight that the government has picked with 53,000 junior doctors is just part of the present attack on the NHS. Cameron and Hunt vaguely promise 'a truly 7-day NHS', then impose a contract on junior doctors, and expect to roll out these changes to other NHS staff. They think public interest and support will wane but we, staff, patients and public must not let this happen. This is everyone's fight (see links below). It is surely government that is now taking risks with patients' lives.

Jacky Davis is a Consultant Radiologist, a founder member of the Keep our NHS Public campaign and a member of the BMA Council. She is the co-author of two books – *NHS SOS*, and *NHS For Sale*. Follow her at @DrJackyDavis for up to date news about the NHS

For further information go to : <http://keepournhspublic.com/> <http://www.nhsforsale.info/> @keepnhspublic

Long haul for Labour

Dave Watson on Labour's break with austerity

The Holyrood election debate was looking pretty boring, but in February Scottish Labour suddenly made it interesting. Kezia Dugdale, Labour's new leader, took a bold move to break away from austerity economics. She proposes increasing the Scottish Rate of Income Tax (SRIT) by 1p. This will raise around £480m, less a £50m rebate to ensure that low paid workers under £20,000 per year don't lose out. These are the Calman Commission powers agreed some years ago and not the more radical Smith Commission devolution of all income tax that will probably be implemented in 2017.

The current opinion polls are not encouraging for those on the left in Scotland. Scottish Labour's best polling would deliver 33 seats (down four from 2011), all from the list. The Scottish Greens have been stuck at a level that is unlikely to deliver big gains. The far left have attempted a degree of unity under the label RISE, although predictably a number of groups have remained outside the tent. And we shouldn't forget the Tories. Their vote has remained steady and they are trying a new pitch to referendum NO voters, as the only party that will seriously defend the union.

The legacy of the referendum and the disastrous Better Together campaign remains, with many voters unwilling to listen to what Labour has to say. Labour can't win in Scotland when only 4% who voted YES in last year's referendum appears willing to contemplate voting for the party.

Despite the polls, Scottish Labour as a party is stronger than it has been for years. Membership has doubled and freed from the influence of Westminster MPs, it has a new focus on the Scottish Parliament. Kezia Dugdale has been innovative and inclusive and leads a party that is more united than it has been for a generation.

The strength of the SNP in government has been its mastery of process. The soothing left of centre rhetoric plays well even when actual delivery is more limited.

Difficult issues are pushed into reviews and consultations, all to build the biggest tent possible for the next referendum. If all else fails, it's wicked Westminster's fault and Cameron usually obliges by playing the traditional panto Tory role.

So far this SNP strategy is working pretty well. The Budget Bill can be a pressure point for the strategy, but the steady Finance Secretary, John Swinney is adept at hiding the pain. If a service has to be cut disproportionately one year, then he puts a bit extra back the following year. And of course any difficult decisions are the fault of Tory austerity.

Local government is usually hit hardest, not least because councils can be shot as the messenger of difficult decisions, far removed from ministers, and still largely led by Labour. However, this year John Swinney went much further with a cash cut of 3.5% or £350m in 2016-17 - that's 5.2% or £500m in real terms.

This has resulted in a fraught dialogue between CoSLA and the Scottish Government over the grant allocation. Not helped by John Swinney's draconian penalties for any council daring to consider an increase in the Council Tax. CoSLA voted to reject the package and, at least privately, even SNP councils are deeply unhappy. Labour councillors are not normally political animals, rather passive administrators more comfortable with managerialism than political rhetoric. However, this budget has seen political motions and even demonstrations outside parliament.

The problem with an austerity



Light at the end of the tunnel?

Dave Watson is the secretary of Trade Unions for Scottish Labour

budget is that unless you expand the spending envelope, the debate simply deteriorates into robbing Peter to pay Paul. Nicola Sturgeon knows this and has sneered at the Labour benches asking which services they would cut.

Labour's new plan means that Scotland is starting to have a serious debate about tax. It also positions Labour as the anti-austerity party and the SNP where they have in reality always been, as a social democratic party. In many ways they are following a New Labour political strategy - warm words and some limited actions on social justice, but don't frighten the voting middle classes.

Labour's policy shift is exposing the SNP's anti-austerity rhetoric. Standing 'shoulder to shoulder' with the Tories is an uncomfortable position for those SNP members who regard themselves as being on the left of politics.

Will any of this make a big difference to the outcome of the Scottish Parliament elections? Possibly not. Scottish Labour's political problems are deep seated and it will take time to turn around. This is a longer term project, but action on tax positions the party where it should be in Scotland - firmly on the left.

Yarl's Wood protests

Sarah Cope calls for continued action

Yarl's Wood, a privately-run detention centre in the Bedfordshire countryside, holds around 400 women and families awaiting asylum decisions. The centre is run by Serco, which won the £70 million contract in 2007.

The detention centre is located at the rear of a huge business park (located alongside an indoor sky-diving centre and a pet crematorium, amongst other mismatched businesses, and is effectively hidden away from view from local residents.

Hidden away too from various people who might want to visit and see the place described by the Chief Inspector of Prisons last year as 'a place of national concern.' Indeed, Labour MP Catherine West recently had her request to visit Yarl's Wood turned down by the Home Office, sparking a petition.

In June, August and November last year, hundreds of people gathered from across the UK to protest against immigration detention outside Yarl's Wood. Movement for Justice, Lesbians and Gays Support Migrants, Sisters Uncut, Women for Refugee Women and Black Dissidents were amongst the groups present.

At June's demonstration, some protestors were in tears at the sight that greeted them when they saw the detention centre for the first time. Women opened the windows of their rooms the few inches they would open, waved their hands, or home-made banners, shouting "freedom!", "No human is illegal!" and "Shut down Yarl's Wood!"

Such was the anger of the crowd that a fence was knocked down, allowing protestors to approach the perimeter fence of the complex itself. On the latest demonstration in November, which attracted over 1000 protestors, demonstrators came prepared with ladders and climbed the 20 foot fence to display a banner or the women to see inside.

Speakers at the rallies included former detainees. One woman spoke of the Home Office's

attempts to return her to Nigeria, despite her brother's death at the hands of Boko Haram and the obvious threat to her family's safety.

Another spoke of living conditions in the facility, and asked:

"We are not animals, so why are we kept in a cage?"

As well as volunteering with Women for Refugee Women, whose 'Set Her Free' campaign is focused on ending the detention of women, I am also a Yarl's Wood Befriender. This non-campaigning group, set up by the Bishop of Bedford when Yarl's Wood was built in 2000, trains and then matches people up with detainees who have requested a visitor.

As a befriender I have met women from across the world seeking asylum on issues such as their sexuality, FGM and domestic abuse. The UK is the only country in Europe to impose no time limit on detention, and I have seen what huge harm this does to both the physical and mental health of the women.

Not only that, but the healthcare available in Yarl's Wood is extremely poor, provided by troubled firm G4S. Women complain that their health issues are repeatedly ignored. Indeed, in March 2014 a 40 year old woman died in Yarl's Wood of a heart attack. She had been given paracetamol for her chest pains by the healthcare centre.

Women are sometimes taken out of Yarl's Wood by Serco guards for hospital appointments, but there has been controversy recently about the practice of taking women in handcuffs. Serco claim they carry out a 'risk assessment' and decide whether or not handcuffs are necessary.

A hopeful moment for those of us concerned about the issue of immigration detention came



recently upon the publication of the Shaw Review.

An independent review into the welfare of immigration detainees commissioned by the home secretary, it called for ministers to reduce "boldly and without delay" the 30,000 people detained each year.

It also called for a complete ban on the detention of pregnant women in immigration centres such as Yarl's Wood (99 pregnant women were detained there last year).

Shaw also said that there should also be a "presumption against detention" of victims of rape and sexual violence, people with learning difficulties, and those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The six-month review was commissioned by the Home Secretary after years of criticism about the treatment of immigration detainees, including incidents of deaths, self-harm and sexual abuse in Britain's 10 immigration removal centres.

The report was delivered to the Home Office in September 2015 but not published until January this year.

The next demonstration outside Yarl's Wood is planned for 12th March; as awareness and outrage grows about the issue of detention, the plan is for it to be the biggest one yet.

Meanwhile, the Shaw Review's sixty-four recommendations for how detention needs to change await to be implemented.

Sarah Cope is a Green Party member and was chair of Green Party Women 2012-2015. She wrote the party's policy on ending immigration detention. She volunteers with Women for Refugee Women and the Yarl's Wood Befrienders

EU FREEDOMS

Cameron's EU referendum folly

Don Flynn on when telling the truth is the only decent thing to do

The UK electorate is now steaming ahead to a vital decision day on the 23rd June when it will have the opportunity to vote 'in' or 'out' on Mr Cameron's renegotiated terms of the country's membership of the European Union.

At the time of writing the outcome seems to be balanced on a knife-edge. The establishment, spanning the economic and political interests of the most powerful people in the country, will by a step-by-step process, come out over the next few months to reveal all the 'evidence' which points to staying in the Union.

The populist insurgency in the meantime will work hard to create an emotional mood which chimes with the deep unhappiness of millions of ordinary people with the prevailing state of affairs and call for 'out'. The appeal of this current is reaching deep into the Conservative party, with a large part of its rank-and-file signing up to the 'out' cause together with a significant chunk of Mr Cameron's own Cabinet members. The news that the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, is throwing his considerable weight behind the 'outers' is likely to increase the sense that the attempt by Cameron to choreograph an outcome that would favour, when the hullabaloo is all over, a vote to stay in, is in danger of seriously unravelling.

Detached point of view

Yet the ordinary citizen looking at this from a detached point of view will probably wonder if the choice on offer is something like the one that the ancient Greek sea captains had to face when the only courses they could set were either into the maw of the dragon monster Scylla, or the sucking whirlpool of the equally dreadful Charybdis. One way or the other, the future doesn't look too bright.

Neither are the leading politicians who are clamouring to have their voices heard on the issue aren't helping very much. Both sides of the argument seem set on generating their own sets of myths – mobilising emotions of fear and anxiety on one hand and

the mood of reckless abandonment that a gambler needs before making a high-cost risky bet on the other. For the 'inners' membership of the EU gives Britain a large degree of protection against all the bad things that can happen in a dangerous and unpredictable world. The 'outers' tell us it is holding the country back from the fulfilment of its destiny as a great trading nation which the whole world wants to do business with.

For a great swathe of voters these are issues that need to be boiled down to bite-size concreteness, allowing the truth of the matter to emerge from the things that truly concern them. This is a pretty good way to go and it would be really helpful if the contending viewpoints could tell us what the implications of staying

Measures like a strongly enforced minimum income set at living wage levels provide the remedy that is needed to support workers in the segments of the economy where there is competition between natives and newcomers and would be far more effective in supporting all round prosperity than ending the right to move freely

in or going out will be for an economy which desperately needs to create many more good quality jobs, public services can aspire to excellence, tax and revenue systems operate on progressive principles where the rich pay their share, and having housing security, whether in a place you own or rent, isn't an impossible dream.

Good luck to any politician or citizen campaigner who can spell out when 'in' or 'out' the EU will mean in terms of all these things. In actuality we have to expect that the areas on which the vote will hinge will devolve down to a much smaller list of concerns, with immigration looming largest of all.

The deal that EU president has set up to be done on the renegotiated terms of membership covers five separate headings but it was

the fourth of these, covering social benefits and free movement, which was turned to most frequently in media coverage to judge whether Cameron had been successful in achieving his ends. Issues like 'competitiveness' or 'sovereignty' have the smack of the theological about them unless they can be shown to have practical implications in the real world and a deal on 'social benefits and free movement' seem to have more potential in that direction. Most people have a strong intuitive sense of what the implications are for having more people come into the country and feel they know what this will mean to them personally.

Unravelling

But it is unravelling this one single issue that the bogus nature of the whole renegotiation exercise becomes apparent. The exercise of the free movement rights available to citizens of the EU cannot by any rational standard be countered as one of the principle flaws in its set-up. In a woeeful history of missed opportunities to build genuine solidarity in a union based on the well-being of its citizens there are much higher failings that ought to count against the Europe of the single market. The ineptness of the Stability and Growth Pact, which prevents member states from running a fiscal deficit greater than 3 percent or debt of 60 percent of the country's GDP ought properly to appear much closer to the top of the list as a consequence to the role it has played in apparently shackling governments which want to invest to bring economies rapidly out of a downturn.

Or the Common Agricultural Policy – in principle a good idea if it served the social goal of supporting diverse producers of high quality food produce. But 80 percent of CAP aid goes to just 25 percent of farms, with the biggest slice of the subsidy pie is handed to the landed gentry, environment-destroying mega-farm and vast agro-industrial conglomerates.

The failure of the euro as a unifying project and the roll-out of austerity across the continent as

the answer to the crisis instigated by the 2008 credit crunch, with the devastating impact this has had on national economies from Greece and Cyprus in the east to Spain and Portugal in the west are all part of the many reasons why citizens are right to acknowledge the grand scale of the mess that the region is in.

Measured against this woeful record the fact that the EU has facilitated a means by which its working people can at least escape the worst of what a badly managed single market has thrown at them ought to be countered as one of its redeeming features. As businesses collapsed and public services were cut back to the bone causing unemployment to soar up into high double digit figures young people in particular, the greatest victims of austerity, have been partially compensated by the fact that some of them have been able to flee to other parts of Europe where they have some hopes for finding work.

All well and good say the critics of free movement, but what about the detrimental effects it has on the populations of indigenous workers in the countries the migrants head towards? An honest debate around this question would take into account the very wide consensus that exists amongst economic analysts which centres on the view that negative impacts are greatly exaggerated. The net effect of inward migration has been a small positive boost to the average incomes of the countries receiving the workers. Measures like a strongly enforced minimum income set at living wage levels provide the remedy that is needed to support workers in the segments of the economy where there is competition between natives and newcomers and would be far more effective in supporting all round prosperity than ending the right to move freely.

Pro-working class measure

It does little to encourage those of us who see the right to free movement as an essential pro-working class measure to see that the leading lights in both the 'in' and the 'out' campaigns are going to continue to trash what it represents in the Europe of today. The 'outers' want to continue the hype because it shows up strongly in all their surveys on what people feel is wrong with the EU. But



David Cameron: more porkies

the 'inners' are just as bad. Labour supporters of the cross-party Britain Stronger in Europe campaign intend to argue during the course of the debates around the referendum that Cameron is justified in acting to curtail EU migration and that the concessions on social welfare he claims he has won from Europe will do just that.

This is folly. The benefit curb will not reduce migration because calculations about the social security available to people in work play a very small role in the decision-making of would-be migrants who are still in their home countries. On the other hand the prospect of a minimum wage enhanced to the level that George Osborne has proposed in his last budget will certainly increase the attractiveness of the UK to any-

one fleeing poverty-level wages and unemployment.

The news coming out of the Labour party at the time of writing, that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell intend to argue against the notion of an 'emergency brake' on EU migration and benefit curbs for newcomers ought to be welcomed as evidence that some politicians at least are prepared to argue their case on the referendum on the basis of the actual evidence. It's a smart move. If it takes a hold on the debate it will not only provide a rebuttal to the so much of the nonsense coming out of both the 'in' and 'out' camps, but also the best indication of what needs to be done to reform the EU to the point where it can advance the interests of all of its citizens.

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Flying the red flag for a social Europe

Claude Moraes on making the independent Labour left case for the EU

The need for a focused Labour campaign for 'In' is now even more critical in view of the deepening Tory splits and the overall Tory approach to the EU. On the leave side Tories like Iain Duncan Smith and Chris Grayling have always had an aggression towards social Europe which is now being laid bare.

Following the renegotiation and the firing of the starting gun on the referendum Jeremy Corbyn wrote in the *Observer* that it would not be Cameron's deal that will be on the ballot paper - but more important issues - jobs, investment, employment rights, environmental protection, peace, security and international cooperation. So he went on, Labour will run a positive campaign for change and a Europe of sustainable growth, jobs and social justice. He said that Labour and the unions played the key role in keeping employment rights out of the negotiations but the Tory leavers might use leaving as their chance for a bonfire of rights in the aftermath.

At least one lesson from the Scottish referendum campaign must be that this must be a relentlessly Labour campaign - that we achieved some good things in the EU in line with our values but another Europe is also possible. This is what should unite the overwhelming majority of party members, MPs and unions in a strong campaign.

The white noise of Tory splits and leadership power plays over the EU referendum give Labour even more responsibility to guide the debate in the interests of the people.

There has always been a broader case for the European Union beyond just a single market:

- Idealistic as the case for an area of peace and stability based on progressive values.

- Pragmatic in a globalised economy countries are increasingly interdependent with a need to find common solutions to common problems from the economy to the environment to justice and migration.

- Economic interest with an estimated 4.2million UK jobs linked to UK exports and 50% of Britain's trade with other EU member states, even if such figures are questioned, there is no doubt the single market is a major jobs and prosperity boost for the UK.

Yet the big mistake those on the left would make in the coming weeks, those who broadly support our continued membership, is to make such a case on its own. Others can do that, we have to make a Labour case for Europe and we have to answer the concerns many on the left have about the EU. This is an opportunity to do it and we can't be half-hearted about the case or complacent about concerns on the left including TTIP, state aid, rail nationalisation or the EU response to the refugee crisis or Greece.

First, the Labour case. Having spent most of my time as an MEP watching the UK's key employment rights legislated in the EU and before that when I worked at the TUC a social rights lifeline thrown to the left in Britain in the 'Thatcher/Major years' - it does not take a 'project fear' to remind ourselves that the UK out of the EU would experience a few

evenings in the House of Commons with a Conservative majority to remove multiple hard won employment rights.

In the end it was progressives in the EU who delivered baseline maternity and paternity leave to the UK, new national laws on agency workers, part time workers' rights to paid leave, new pensions and access to training rights, working time, entitlement to at least four weeks paid leave, and health and safety across many industries. Remarkably too equal pay, and the sex discrimination and race equality directives.

But surely a progressive left majority can do these things on our own at some future time, or so the argument often goes on the left? This ignores the heart of the progressive narrative on Europe and the world which was brought home to me in my first weeks as Labour's Employment spokesperson in the European Parliament in 1999. Meeting German and British trade unionists against the backdrop of a wave of 'restructuring' redundancies in retail and manufacturing it was obvious to them that the companies involved were multinational. National law would go some way - but cross border protection was essential. And so the UK voted for the Information and Consultation Directive as a check on multinational power to sack workers at a whim. At a time when so many aspects of the EU's progressive credentials are in question let's remind ourselves too that beyond social rights, the Labour case encompasses those other key areas where working together there is a clear progressive left case for the EU. Key independent UK environmental experts in January warned that leaving the EU posed a 'huge risk' to Britain's environment and a very sharp decline in pan European protections. This is because the UK was instrumental in the EU plan to adopt at least a 40 per cent carbon reduction commitment for 2030. The renewable energy directive has led to a dramatic increase in renewables capacity in the UK. Whether targets on air quality, energy consumption, clean beaches, fish stocks and species protection--the EU has been a progressive success and is part of the reason why Green politicians Caroline Lucas and Jean Lambert will also be campaigning for IN.

As you examine the left case for Europe it becomes clear that we are often forced into defending the organisation as a whole 'right' or 'wrong'. But it is critical even in this short campaign to explain that the European Union has a right, left and centre. Those in the European Parliament and Commission are of different political parties and of course member state governments are self-evidently moving from one party to another in electoral cycles. When I was legislating on the Race Equality Directive I did not expect another MEP, Jean Marie Le Pen to vote the same way as I did and I do not expect people to naively regard both of us as the EU. I want to stay in an EU where I fight for progressive

left policies. He and his daughter want to leave the EU and fight for nationalist right wing, fascist policies. An extreme example perhaps but perhaps time to focus on some dividing lines.

With David Cameron's renegotiation deal still not yet finalised the left must identify that the upcoming referendum is more than Cameron's EU reform deal - it's on the much more important question of our entire EU membership. There are few surprises in Cameron's proposals for change. It's a mixture of some reasonable improvements, small changes and irrelevant details designed more to appease those in his cabinet and on his backbenches. Thanks to Labour and trade union pressure, British workers' rights have been successfully excluded from Cameron's negotiations, preventing the Tories from hitting workers' rights to minimum paid leave, rights for agency workers, guaranteed paid maternity and paternity leave and protection from discrimination. Cameron's negotiations have

mostly focused on issues that will not have a decisive impact on what the EU delivers to people in Britain and across the Union nor will his proposals for change ever satisfy his far-right Conservative back benchers calling for British exit of the EU. The left must not lose sight of the fact that our EU membership is worth far more than whatever reforms Cameron secures. The fact that social rights have been excluded from the negotiations proves that Cameron needs the left in this referendum and that the left has secured so much in the EU that must not be taken for granted.

The key to winning our case in the EU is ensuring we are at the table fighting for progressive left policies on every subject. It is for this reason that working with other left and progressive parties Labour MEPs working with social partners and other elected politicians have for example ensured that despite all that is said about the UK budget contribution between 2007 and 2013 EU funds to the UK helped create over 87,000 jobs, assisted over 29,000 businesses and supported 1,770 research and development projects. The key point here is not that we were 'recycling' our own contributions but that our progressive politics has ensured for years that when the left decide, in Scotland, Wales or the poorest boroughs of London, structural and other EU funds go to where it matters, to the most vulnerable.

It is the same progressive strain that has seen a strong push by Labour MEPs in legislation to benefit the consumer in their everyday lives against monopolies. In contrast to the powerful multinationals time and again these benefits have been underestimated but greatly appreciated at grassroots level, in telecoms, transport, consumer rights, passenger rights - the list is endless. This is the progressive part of the EU in action.

A crucial part of the Labour case for the EU is to ensure that both our members, supporters and vot-

ers in the country are enthused and motivated to vote for IN when the referendum is called. That means taking on some of the key concerns that they have and not patronising our own supporters about those concerns. Take for example the refugee crisis. While it is the case that the EU institutions have had plans in place for over the past two years, the complacency and in some cases absolute aggression of some member states such as Hungary have ensured that we have two classes of EU member state action on the crisis. There is a clear division between the likes of Germany and Sweden and those member states avoiding the heavy lifting and leaving Greece and Italy to manage the greater part of the crisis. The sheer complexity of the crisis cannot hide the serious failings of EU member states and we should be open and honest about this. In turn we should promote the solutions. An organised and compassionate response is a tough available option in the EU. It is one that the EU can deliver at a cost and we should be honest about it with our supporters.

Similarly on TTIP Labour MEPs share the concerns of thousands of Labour Party supporters and voters about the potential long term threats to our public services. It has been our job to allay these concerns and ensure progressive priorities are met. This includes maintaining the EU's standards on environmental protection, labour standards, securing a comprehensive exclusion of all public services and reject the Investment State Dispute Settlement provisions (ISDS). That is why Labour MEPs voted against the Parliament's resolution on TTIP in July 2015 as the text did not fully exclude ISDS, and did not suitably exempt public services and safeguard environmental standards and workers' rights. It is also the case that outside the EU a Conservative government will be free to make a trade deal with the US without any protections or adequate safeguards. Although the final vote on the actual TTIP agreement may still be some years Labour MEPs have already made clear that when the vote comes to Parliament we will oppose a TTIP agreement that is inclusive of ISDS and will not support a deal that endangers our public services, our environmental standards or our democratic rights. Questions also arise about rail privatisation and state aid. They too can be answered and must be by those who are arguing the Labour case for IN.

We cannot avoid the tough questions about the EU's failings. With the election of a truly internationalist leader in Jeremy Corbyn MP committed to an EU with human rights at its heart we can see that the Labour Party and ultimately Labour members, supporters and many voters can be identified by their internationalism. Yet many are less enthusiastic about the EU during these difficult times, and in the context of economic and social crisis.

Our job is to show our Labour family that being an internationalist equates with support for staying in the EU and fighting for a better and progressive EU after winning that referendum.

Our job is to show our Labour family that being an internationalist equates with support for staying in the EU and fighting for a better and progressive EU after winning that referendum



Claude Moraes is a Labour MEP for London

The new pragmatism

Jon Taylor exposes Netanyahu's hypocrisy in raging against Iran while repressing Palestinians

Last year (2015) was troublesome for Israel. The big event was Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's total opposition to the US-Iran deal on nuclear power. In his obsession with this, Netanyahu continues his disdain for President Obama and hitches Israel to the ragged cart of the reactionary Republican party. He has also created strong opposition to his policy amongst American Jews. In one poll, 64% expressed grave concern at Netanyahu's policy and supported their own Government. His actions have considerably weakened the Jewish lobby in Washington.

There is an irony here. One of Netanyahu's arguments is that the Iranians will cheat on the treaty – the Americans are so naive. Well, who was it who cheated on the Americans in the first place? American money was given to Israel on the condition that it was not used to build nuclear weapons. "Nuclear arsenal? We couldn't possibly confirm that..."

Once the accord was signed, the government blitzed the media. It was a new Munich agreement; Obama was the new Chamberlain appeasing the Hitler in Teheran; were it not for Netanyahu, the situation would have been far worse. Their next goal? To persuade Congress to vote against the accord. They failed again, spectacularly. In the event, the sum total of Netanyahu's efforts have been to turn even more American Jews (and Jews elsewhere) against Israel and to make the government look very foolish in the eyes of the world. The treaty was signed by all the leading world powers.

Would it have benefited Iran to have been able to deliver a nuclear bomb? With its economy in free fall under sanctions, it would have brought intolerable pressure on the country's finances. Would it have sought to destroy Israel – a country with a substantial arsenal of nuclear weapons? A highly unlikely prospect. Would Israel be sitting round waiting? In any case, Iran – aside from

Ahmadinejad and his extreme colleagues – is not interested in attacking Israel. If the Mullahs hate Israel, it is more to do with Israel's support for the Shah when he was in power. Today the Iranian young are far more interested in joining the globalised world and doing business, something at which this ancient Persian state was once extremely well practised.

Internally, Israel has been plagued by right-wing attacks on Palestinians and revenge attacks by Palestinians themselves and by an increasing division between the right and the left. The situation around Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem is tense. There are daily attacks from both sides, with the Israeli army winning most battles. We now have the "Terrorism of the Stones" to quote one Hebrew newspaper; and terrorism must be stamped out. Never mind what is happening in Gaza.

Netanyahu's response? Police snipers shooting stone-throwers from afar. Plus long mandatory prison sentences for those who make it to court coupled with heavy fines for the parents of those under the age of responsibility. If the parents cannot pay, they will lose their Social Security benefit on which so many depend. Those in control do not seem to learn: the more you ratchet up the punishment, the more you encourage the very incidents that lead to the punishments in the first place. Army Chief of Staff Eizenkot understands something however: "Already, since the beginning of the year, 19 Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire in the West Bank...This is a high figure which is not conducive to calming the situation". Is anyone listening?

Arab villages continue to be destroyed to allow for the building of (illegal) settlements. The latest is Um al-Hiran in the Negev in southern Israel. Despite the fact that the villagers have offered an alternative solution which would leave their village standing with the new settlement – Hiran – built alongside, the Israeli government is adamant: Bedouin Um



Netanyahu in defiant mood

al-Hiran must go to make room for Jewish Hiran.

Netanyahu does acknowledge the need for a Palestinian state but then, as always, makes sure to place endless obstacles in the way of serious negotiations. Against this has to be set the statement of Naftali Bennett, leader of the Jewish Home Party: "Israel has no interest in the continued existence of the Palestinian Authority". Interestingly, Israel has been conducting secret discussions with Hamas, following the offensive by ISIS on the Egyptian army in Sinai. Former Government advisor Eiland declared: "Strange as it may seem, it is in Israel's interest to bolster the rule of Hamas in the Gaza Strip as a bulwark against ISIS". It's a strange world indeed.

What is the outcome of all this turmoil in Israel? Overall, there has been a distinct shift in mood. To quote Micah Goodman, Director of a pluralistic Academy for young adults in the West Bank: "The right believed that settling the biblical heartland of the West Bank would hasten salvation and bring on the Messianic era. The left believed that a withdrawal from all the territories conquered in the 1967 war would bring peace and allow Israel finally to become part of the family of nations....Over the last 20 years, Israelis stopped believing in both ideas. The new left does not speak of peace but of occupation. The new right does not speak of salvation, but of security". It seems that pragmatism reigns.

Jon Taylor is a long standing Chartist supporter, a retired teacher, lecturer, social worker and director

Israel's inhuman and illegal jailing of children

Cat Smith on the plight of Palestinian children

It is profoundly distressing that in 2016, there should be any need to discuss what UNICEF have termed the "widespread, systematic and institutionalized" ill-treatment of children who are detained by the military of a country considered to be our ally. All civilians subject to military occupation have basic rights, which almost all states recognise. That children should be afforded extra protection is not only a legal commitment that most nations – including Israeli – have agreed to, but should be amongst the most obvious of ethical imperatives.

Sadly, Palestinian children often face ill-treatment at the hands of Israeli forces and are subject to a wide array of abuses. From the use of night raids to effect arrests, to holding children without access to parents or lawyers during interrogations, one can hardly think of a less appropriate way to treat minors, some of whom are not even yet teenagers.

Conviction rate

As the US State Department has noted, "the Israeli military courts had a conviction rate of more than 99 percent for Palestinians". This is no doubt helped by the continued practice of issuing documents without an Arabic translation and of extracting confessions through coercive techniques.

Another concern is the location and manner in which children are detained. Half of all Palestinian child prisoners from the West Bank continue to be transferred to prisons inside Israel – a practice the British government has described as an unjustifiable breach of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This is not only a breach of the basic laws of war, but makes it massively more difficult for children held prisoner to receive any visits from family, who must apply for permits to enter Israel. Given these applications will

often be rejected, this leaves many children serving their entire sentence without a visit from a family member.

I welcome the fact that in 2012 the Foreign Office funded an independent report into the plight of Palestinian child prisoners.

The top-level legal delegation reported on the "undisputed facts which compel us to conclude that Israel is in breach...of the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child". The report's recommendation formed an important part of the pressure that has seen a number of changes, both legal and procedural, introduced.

However, it seems that the level of abuse has largely remained unchanged and that rather than being a diminishing problem, the number of children being processed by Israel's military is now greater than it has been for many years.

According to the Israeli Prison Service there was an 80 per cent jump in the number of minors in military detention in October 2015 - the highest monthly level since April 2010.

A further area of concern is the use of 'administrative detention' to hold children without charge or trial. Our responsibilities as a country are particularly acute in this area, given the ordinances Israel uses are derived from the powers created by the British Mandatory authorities in the 1940s.

Administrative detention

Four Palestinian teenagers from occupied East Jerusalem and two children from elsewhere in the West Bank are currently held under administrative detention. This is an example of the situation having moved backwards in recent months. No children from the West Bank had



Education: IDF style

been held in this status from December 2011 until October 2015. But again the Israeli authorities have resorted to this procedure, which means children are being held without even the knowledge of what they are accused of having done.

I urge the Minister to redouble efforts aimed at ensuring that no child should be subjected to administrative detention.

Child prisoners

More generally, it is vital that we see continued pressure from the UK for a complete overhaul of Israel's treatment of child prisoners. I hope that the Minister will ensure that the concerns raised here today are communicated to the Israeli government in the strongest possible terms.

Britain must play its part in bringing these abuses to an end. Supporting a follow-up to the 2012 delegation, focused on ensuring the implementation of the earlier recommendations would be a very welcome step.

Whilst our ultimate aim must be for Israel's system of military justice to be dismantled as part of the ending of its occupation of Palestinian land, in the mean time, we must do all that we can to ensure that all children – whether they are Israeli or Palestinian – are treated fairly and equally.

This is an edited text of a speech Cat Smith Labour MP for Lancaster and Fleetwood was unable to make in a Parliamentary debate on Israel Palestine earlier this year

France shifts right

Andrew Coates looks at the crisis on the left and the rise of the extreme right

A dramatic electoral shift to the right hit France last December in the wake of the Paris atrocities. President Hollande's Socialist Party took a hammering in regional elections. In elections to regional councils, the Union de la Droite won 42.83% of the vote in the second round against the Left's 28.86%. The far-right Front National (FN) made the headlines. It topped the first ballot, and still scored over 27% in the final one. Marine Le Pen's party was only blocked from victory in regional assemblies such as Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, and Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur - where they initially scored over 40% - by calls from the Parti Socialiste to vote for the Right. The FN ended up with 358 seats but with little effective power. Control in a majority of regions now rests in the hands of the party of Nicolas Sarkozy, Les Républicains, and its allies.

The collapse of the left is both emotionally and politically disturbing. At just over 9% for their diverse lists in the first round, left competitors of the governing Socialists, from the Front de Gauche, to the Greens did not do well, the Greens halved their support. Cities, towns and rural areas which were the birthplaces of French socialism and the labour movement, have turned to the right, if not the Front National.

The mass Islamist killings in Paris on the 13th of November put terrorism on the political agenda. The hard right exploited the revulsion that followed. But research indicates that fears arising from mass unemployment (heaviest in regions where the FN did well), more than anxiety about Islamism or prejudice against Muslims, played a decisive role in its support. 43% of those without a job and those in manual work backed Marine Le Pen's lists. Another reaction was mass abstention at over 50%.

The Front National is in fact not simply an anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic party. It has denounced globalisation, blaming international finance and multi-

nationalists for the difficulties it associates with migrant labour. It advocates a strong welfare system. But it is the FN's strident claims to defend national sovereignty - leaving the Euro, if not the European Union, and economic protectionism - which marks it out.

France, according to Daniel Lindenberg, is undergoing a 'conservative revolution' in which the 'neo-reactionaries' he attacked in a 2003 pamphlet (*le Rappel à l'ordre*) are winning. More striking than hostility to Islam and migration is the attraction for the FN's 'sovereignist' ideology for both traditionalists and some former left-wing intellectuals. Belief, if not worship, of the nation state has brought them together. The idea that clawing back national 'independence' can solve France's difficulties echoes many other European populist parties and the arguments of those in the UK arguing for a 'Brexit'.

Socialist President François Hollande responded to November 13th by declaring a State of Emergency. This restricted political protest and as part of a crack down on violent Islamism and amongst other measures, assigned suspected supporters of the genocidal Daesh to house arrest. Arbitrary implementation and abuses have followed with demands from many on the left to call a halt to them. There are now proposals to make these exceptional measures easier, and revise the Constitution to remove French nationality from those convicted of terrorism. In practice this will only be applicable to those with dual nationality. From the Ligue des droits de l'Homme to supporters of Hollande's own Parti Socialiste, there has been strong opposition to the change. One of the last left-wing members of the Valls' cabinet, Minister of Justice, Christiane Taubira, resigned in protest. In February, as the legislation was going through the National Assembly, a hefty number of 92 Socialists, voted against the clause.

Hollande and his Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, have announced plans that claim to tackle one of the main themes of his original victory - unemploy-



Hollande: will need more than prayers in 2017

ment. These centre on weakening labour legalisation. They are unlikely to be popular and will add to the feeling of disillusion already seen in a new wave of union demonstrations and other social conflicts. As minds concentrate on 2017, when Presidential elections will take place, there have been calls for open primaries embracing the entire left to select a unifying candidate. Neither Hollande, nor his self-appointed rival, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, are enthusiastic.

The French left is in dire straits. All the surveys of opinion indicate a heavy defeat in 2017. They can draw small comfort from divisions on the right, notably between Nicolas Sarkozy and his rivals in Les Républicains. Marine Le Pen's Front National is considered a threat to democracy by 56% in a recent poll (*Le Monde*. 6.2.16.). As well she is.

Andrew Coates is
Chartist's press
officer

A political revolution in the USA?

Paul Garver on the politics of an insurgent democratic socialist

The campaign of independent democratic socialist Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is transforming the American political landscape.

His call for a political revolution has mobilized the enthusiasm of a post-Cold War Millennial generation that rejects growing political and economic inequality and is open to socialist ideas.

A spiritual grandfather to this new political generation, Sanders is the longest-serving Independent political figure in the U.S. An unusual combination of dogged determination, stubborn adherence to principle, and pragmatism brought Sanders slowly up the political ladder from student socialist to mayor of the small city of Burlington, the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. Though running as an Independent and not adhering to any socialist organization, he never shied away from a 'democratic socialist' designation.

Although his urban Brooklyn accent is still strong and his politics, well to the left of most Vermonters, Sanders won the trust and support even of conservative rural dwellers. As a Federal legislator from Vermont, he championed the interests of dairy farmers, military veterans and gun owning hunters, not the usual constituencies of the U.S. Left, while caucusing with the Democrats. However he strongly supported unions and workers' rights, frequently joining picket lines at strikes, as well as advocating immigrants', women's, and gay rights. In his 2012 re-election to the U.S. Senate he won an incredible 71% of the vote in Vermont.

Along with many on the Left, Sanders supported the 2008 Presidential campaign of Barack Obama and shared its frustration when the Obama administration quickly demobilized the huge volunteer campaign organization and reduced it to a cheering squad for his administration.

Though he campaigned in poetry, President Obama governed in prose, choosing neoliberal economic advisors, pushing through an economic stimulus package that prevented a deep depression

at the cost of bailing out financial institutions and retaining Wall Street bankers in control of a stagnant economy. Obamacare, which extended healthcare insurance coverage through a patchwork of individual subsidies, was secured by guaranteeing profits for the private insurance and pharmaceutical industries from the start. Universal healthcare advocate Sanders pragmatically provided an essential vote for Obamacare after insisting on the inclusion of funding for community health clinics needed in rural Vermont.

By late 2010 the billionaire-funded right-wing populist Tea Party was in full voice, driving the Republican Party to the Right. In this context, the Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) launched a national petition, encouraging Sanders to run for President in the Democratic primaries. PDA was adamant that Sanders should run as a Democrat. PDA, formed in 2004 by veterans of the failed Democratic presidential campaign of populist senator Dennis Kucinich and earlier of Jesse Jackson in the 1980s.

Sanders took many months to decide to run. His candidacy would have to garner real grassroots support and have at least some plausible prospect of victory. Secondly, he had to choose whether to run as an Independent or to run in the Democratic primaries, where he would get more media attention and be able to participate in debates, but would come with the liability of having to promise to support the Democratic candidate if he lost his bid.

When Sanders decided to run as a Democrat, the Clinton-dominated Democratic National Committee calculated that his challenge would strengthen Clinton by engaging a part of the activist base in the party structures.

Sanders has avoided personal attacks on Hillary Clinton, while stressing her financial and political reliance on major financial and healthcare corporations. The Sanders campaign has remained focused on growing economic inequality and on the cor-

rupt domination of the political process by the economic elite. He sums this up in his call for a political revolution against economic and political plutocracy that has to extend far beyond his candidacy.

After Sanders' sweeping victory over Clinton in the early primary in the state of New Hampshire, Clinton-supporting political action committees (PACs) are expected to open a concerted media campaign running negative attack ads against Sanders.

The positive early gains of the Sanders campaign include small financial contributions from over a million supporters; large and enthusiastic rallies, many of them young; strong organized volunteer efforts that go far beyond the reach of the official Sanders campaign, ranging from Labor for Bernie (thousands of dissident local union members whose national union leaderships endorsed Clinton), People for Bernie (led by former Wall Street occupiers) and hundreds of local and regional grassroots organizations and endorsements for Sanders from two loosely organized but very large Internet-based organizations (Democrats for America and MoveOn).

The surge of mass support for Sanders appears to be less tied to his calls for a widely supported universal health insurance system and free public college tuition. Rather it relates to his call for political revolution.

However Sanders fares as a candidate, the real question is whether the enormous energy generated by his candidacy can continue in a more lasting structural way to carry out this revolution. Even though DSA is being rejuvenated by energetic new recruits as new local organizing committees spring up around the country, the organized socialist movement in its entirety is currently far too small for that task. The transformational changes required in American politics to roll back growing political and economic inequality and establish greater social, racial and climate justice must be a protracted mission stretching over generations of struggle.

Paul Garver is a
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US DEMOCRATS

The rise of Bernie Sanders

Dave Cunningham sees a critique of the corporate Democrats behind his success

The four year electoral cycle leading up to the November elections has been the oddest and most unpredictable such experience I can recall. As of about a year ago conventional wisdom had it that the 2016 run-up would see a contest of the dynasts who had dominated the highest branches of the state for the past four decades: Jeb, scion of the Bush family (2 presidents, 12 years in office, a CIA Directorate thrown in) versus Hillary Clinton, a former presidential wife for two terms, former New York Senator, former Secretary of State. In addition, both had access to tons of money (by mid-February, Jeb is said to have burned through 50 million dollars with not a lot to show for it). Outfits like this float on a cushion of money.

Both presumed nominees were seen as carrying a lot of baggage. Jeb, a former Governor of Florida, was generally regarded as appallingly bad at the job. He was also running only a few years after the disastrous regime of his brother, George W. Bush, today derided as one of the worst presidents in US history, with his sloth and neglect when Hurricane Katrina demolished much of New Orleans, his sponsorship of the war against Iraq, and his catastrophic 2008 Great Recession. Meanwhile many Democrats were leery of the war hawk Hillary, purported friend of Henry Kissinger, and who had voted for and supported Bush's invasion of Iraq (an act which probably cost her the 2008 nomination) and who was instrumental in the subsequent destabilization of the Middle East.

Conventional wisdom

Still, no one thought this conventional wisdom (actually a hardened mindset) was seriously askew. When Bernie Sanders announced he was running for the President's office in the late spring of last year he was derided as a crank or a 'gadfly' or just ignored. As for Donald Trump, his arrival on the scene got him

portrayed as an unserious trickster drumming up attention for his television shows and his 'brand'. Everyone knows how well that assumption worked out.

Referring to the use of this kind of conventional wisdom endemic in media journalism, Josh Marshall of *Turning Points Memo* recently sardonically observed that it "has been completely thrown out between former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's disappointing showing in the GOP race, Sen. Bernie Sanders' insurgent campaign giving Hillary Clinton's vast operation a run for its money and a former reality TV star handily winning the New Hampshire primary."

The problem with using the results of the Iowa and New Hampshire votes is demographi-

Hillary still sees the world through the rose-coloured glasses of that '90s consensus. Not Bernie. He sees that in 2016 rising tides don't even lift most boats, that growth comes at a steep price

cal. Iowa is a small rural state with no large cities, a largely white population and few minorities. According to the US Census Bureau, in the year 2010 its total population was 3,107,126, of which white people made up 92.1% and Afro-Americans 3.4%, and a household income less than the national average. The situation is even more atypical in New Hampshire: its total population is estimated at 1,326,813 with whites representing 94% of the population and Afro-Americans 1.5%. (It however has some cities and a household income much higher than Iowa or the national norm.)

Iowa uses a caucus rather than primary voting system, which is a jerry-built, arcane and baroque system no one understands but is profoundly undemocratic. It privileges party activists over rank and file voters. You really can't extrapolate values and attitudes from there.

To understand the bizarre

nature of the Iowa caucus system, see the PBS Newshour January 16, 2016 analysis (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/run-down/heres-how-the-iowa-caucus-works/>).

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Iowa caucuses was not Sanders' speedy rise to a virtual tie with Clinton, but the extent to which Sanders won over the young adult vote by an even larger percent than Barack Obama had in 2008. 84% of voters under thirty, and 58% of voters between the ages 30 and 44, supported Sanders. Equally, in New Hampshire, he won with 83% of voters under 30.

Unanticipated

These figures are amazing and were completely unanticipated.

The most succinct interpretation comes from Corey Robin, author of *The Reactionary Mind* and professor of political science at Brooklyn College. He wrote: "The youngest voting generation today is the most liberal bloc in a long, long time for three reasons. First, they're young and poor, and young, poor people are historically more liberal. Second, they're historically non-white. non-white Americans are historically liberal, too. Third, their white demo is historically liberal compared to older white voters...., "It's not just a function of income ... a question of race and life experiences. Non-white millennials who've been discriminated against—whether for reasons of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation—prefer socialism to capitalism and favor an economically egalitarian society over a competitive, meritocratic society.

"That's why young people are rallying to Sanders: no other candidate has made economic inequality, the growing divide between the haves and have-nots, so central to his or her campaign."

Robin goes on to point out that: "Nearly 70% of college graduates carry, on average, a student loan debt of \$29,000."

An article which has received a lot of attention in the online journal *Salon*, Bill Curry's "It's almost

over for Hillary: this election is a mass insurrection against a rigged system" gives an historical background for the Sanders/Clinton clash in the Democratic Primaries: "...In the 1990s a near bipartisan consensus celebrated a new age of globalization and information technology in which technology and trade spur growth that in turn fosters a broad and inclusive prosperity. Government's job is to deregulate finance and trade and work with business in 'public private partnerships' for progress.

Rose-coloured glasses

"Twenty years on, Hillary still sees the world through the rose-coloured glasses of that '90s consensus. Not Bernie. He sees that in 2016 rising tides don't even lift most boats, that growth comes at a steep price when it comes at all, and that new technology costs more jobs than it creates. He understands that when jobs flow to countries with weak governments and low wages, the American middle class can't get a raise. He sees that public-private partnerships meant pay-to-play politics, and that the whole system runs not on innovation but corruption. My guess is the middle class sees what he sees and wants what he wants: a revolution. If he can continue to drive the debate, they may get one."

(See Curry's *Salon* article online at: http://www.salon.com/2016/02/07/its_almost_over_for_hillary_this_election_is_a_mass_insurrection_against_a_rigged_system)

More interesting

More interesting than the severe tone with which Bill Curry treats Hillary Clinton here is the fact that Mr. Curry was himself a White House counsellor to President Clinton and that in his former role he presumably supported those policies and parts of that 'consensus' he now derides. This may very well represent Mr. Curry's mea culpa moment, but it is also part of an historical revisionism: the attack on middle and working class lives in those years was far worse than he suggests. The Clinton Administrations of the 90s were the period of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and the hollowing out and deindustrialization of the 'Rust Belt' of the US Midwest (Flint and Detroit,



Sanders and Clinton: the Democrats' odd couple

Michigan among them), deregulation in general, 'welfare reform' and the beatification of Alan Greenspan, and more.

Total capitulation

The Clinton Presidency did not initiate all or most of this, of course, but it supported these policies in a real continuity. Even more: this is the period when, as Michelle Alexander demonstrated in her book, *The New Jim Crow*, President Clinton, with the expressed support of Hillary Clinton (who publicly called young black children "super-predators"), helped usher in the period of mass incarceration in the black communities and performed a total capitulation to the Reagan and Bush right wing conceptual universe of taxes and welfare and race and crime. (It's worth noting that *The New Jim Crow* has recently acquired a mass readership among supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement).

And that is the 'consensus' that Hillary Clinton sees through "rose colored glasses"! I think I wouldn't describe the situation the same way.

In this light, and assuming Sanders can maintain his present influence over younger voters for the rest of this year there would not seem to be any way this can end well for Mrs. Clinton.

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Market jitters

We have seen the future and it doesn't work writes **Frank Lee**

Stock market prices, along with bond, interest rates and commodity prices are generally regarded by economists as leading economic indicators. That is to say these various indices indicate the present and possible future trajectory of the economy. Recent high levels of volatility in all of these indicators has given rise to increasing anxiety about the global economy. In the US the Dow Jones Industrial Index (the US Stock Market, DJIA) staged a technical 'recovery' which began in 2009 and reached its apogee of 18,312 points in May 2015. However, from this latter date it has been downhill all the way. The first week of January saw the largest fall of the DJIA in the history of the Dow.

Of course this doesn't mean the end of the world. Stock markets can experience short-term rallies in conditions of general stagnation, but it is the trend that is important. During a depression, which is usually defined as a long-term period of sub-optimal growth, it is quite usual for cyclical upturns and downturns to continue. Plausibly exactly the situation in which the global economy is at the present time.

Drip feed

The world economy never really recovered from the 2008 crash and has been kept alive on a drip feed of artificially low interest rates courtesy of central banks around the world. This goes by the name of Quantitative Easing. A technical recovery is when the macroeconomic indicators seem to be pointing the right way as regards, growth, employment and inflation. But this has been due largely to financial engineering and statistical ledgermain rather than a genuine recovery involving falling unemployment, real growth and low inflation.

Taking the rise in stocks around the world into account - it worked like this. Investors borrowed money at near zero % interest rates from the central bank. With this essentially free cash, they purchased stocks and shares, sometimes stocks/shares

in their own companies. This pushed up the paper value of the shares – paper value since there was no productive investment in capital stock, and inflated stocks. However, this increase in stock prices was counted as growth, when in fact it was nothing of the kind.

Similarly, unemployment was another blatant example of statistical jiggery-pokery. Headline figures for US unemployment show a consistent fall from roughly 10% at the depth of the recession to a low of 5% at the present time. However, this does not mean more of the US workforce was gaining employment. Check out the US Bureau of Labour Statistics and you will find that the figures for employment have been consistently falling to a figure that was last reached in the 1970s. Now how can it be that both unemployment and employment are falling concurrently?

But after looking at the leading indicators, we look to be on the cusp of a big deflationary downturn.

Well if you redefine unemployment and disqualify those who have given up looking for work, discouraged workers, or marginally attached workers it is possible to disappear millions of out of work Americans from the unemployment statistics. Almost 40% of the US labour force, that's 94 million Americans are not in gainful employment.

As for low inflation, Keynesians like Paul Krugman argue that there is no correlation between money supply and inflation, see the low inflation figures QE notwithstanding. Wrong on both counts. The fact is that QE monies never got into the real economy. In the US for example QE went to private banks which then deposited most of it straight back into the Fed's excess reserve funds. During the whole period of QE money supply as measured by M4 broad money actually contracted. Thus no inflation.

A real recovery looks rather different from a paper one. Real output would rise, unemployment

would fall and wages would also rise. Investment would increase and the economy would surpass its past cyclical peak in two or three years.

The Fed's fateful decision to raise interest rates by a tiny baby step of 0.25% represents the first such rise in base rates for seven years but seems to have confirmed what was always suspected with regards to the current 'recovery'- namely that it has been kept going by cheap money from the Fed and this would continue in perpetuity. Once the Fed, soon to be followed by the Bank of Japan, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England, did raise base rates, even by a tiny 0.25% the markets went into meltdown.

Ponzi scheme

Whether central banks around the world can get away with this forever is a moot point. It is in all essentials a Ponzi scheme where existing debt is rolled-over by more debt. Debt is essentially an unfinished transaction and debt-fuelled growth is merely bringing down consumption from the future. The Keynesian view that we can grow our way out of debt only holds when growth outpaces debt. At the present time however the opposite is happening. Public and private debt are expanding exponentially.

Other troublesome factors include the bursting of the Chinese stock and property market bubbles. Chinese growth is faltering which means China's hitherto insatiable demand for primary commodities – real materials, like iron ore, copper, cement – has boomeranged onto commodity producers like Australia, Canada, Brazil and Russia which are now experiencing downturns. World trade is contracting as commodity prices collapse.

Economic forecasting is of course a mug's game. But after looking at the leading indicators, we look to be on the cusp of a big deflationary downturn. Not necessarily tomorrow, but it is baked in the cake for some time in the future.

Frank Lee is an economics teacher and member of Chartist EB

Anyone can be special

Patrick Mulcahy
on an
animated
24-hours

Anyone can be special until they sound like everyone else. This is the main observation made in *Anomalisa*, writer-director Charlie Kaufman's first foray into animation, co-directed by Duke Johnson. Kaufman has long been preoccupied with existentialism, explored in his screenplays for *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and, most recently, *Synecdoche New York*. When Kaufman does animation – or indeed anything – you can be sure that it is not like anything you've seen. It is surprising that the Oscar-nominated screenwriter had to resort to Kickstarter (funding from the public in exchange for rewards) to get this film made but then his work, whilst critically-acclaimed, has never been huge box-office.

A typical Kaufman film is concerned with the perception of reality. In them, characters play God, either as a puppet master offering the public the chance to experience life through the eyes of John Malkovich or a theatre director re-creating his life on a stage. Kaufman films have a highly-controlled tone. It is no surprise that he has turned to animation to refine his effects.

Anomalisa is his most simple film. It follows one day in the life of Michael (voiced by David Thewlis) who has travelled to Cincinnati to give an inspiring talk on customer service. He is the author of a best-selling book on the subject, responsible for a 90% rise in productivity in the companies who take his lessons to heart. Whilst Michael might advocate smiling and being cheerful, he is far from happy himself. His marriage is flat. His son is only interested in the gift that he'll bring back and Michael associates Cincinnati with Bella, the woman he walked out on for a reason he cannot explain. Over the course of 24 hours, he will have an experience that will serve as a reminder of how he behaved in the past.

The characters in *Anomalisa* are three-dimensional dolls with photo-realistic skin and thick lines that extend from their eyes to the sides of their faces. The fronts of their faces are detachable; when removed they resemble the aliens in John Carpenter's *They Live*, automatons in human form. Their dialogue is naturalistic, monotone, exchanges often extended beyond the length at which Michael can endure. The taxi driver extols the virtues of Cincinnati zoo and the city's chilli ('not like any you've ever tasted') just a little too much. The joke is

that everyone makes the same observations. The broad details define a place and these somehow are the only things people care to mention, anxious not to alarm.

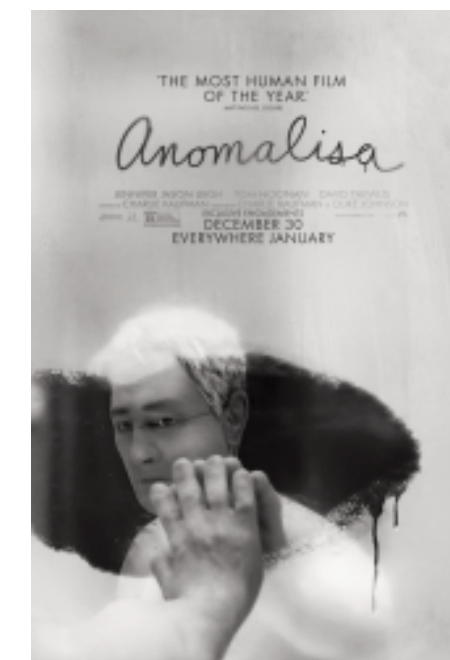
Kaufman's dry humour – a lengthy ordering of room service is followed by an announcement of when Michael will receive the meal – belies Michael's aching sadness. He speaks to Bella for the first time in ten years, invites her for a drink and then is misconstrued. He wants to understand why he broke up with her, what drew him outside of himself. The disastrous encounter leads him back to his room, but then he hears a voice unlike any he has heard before, that of Lisa (voiced by Jennifer Jason Leigh) who has come to Cincinnati with her friend Emily to hear him speak. It is during this encounter that Michael becomes besotted with her.

Anomalisa is notable for a scene of 'puppet sex' that invites us to see our behaviour outside of ourselves, how the giving of pleasure is a matter of sequencing. Then the film takes an odd direction, including a detour into Kaufman's trademark surrealism – Michael is called to the manager's office.

The film is set during George W. Bush's presidency. Kaufman seems partly nostalgic of a time when people could smoke in their hotel room. (I don't share his enthusiasm.) It builds unsurprisingly to Michael's breakdown and the presentation of an odd purchase from an 'all-night toy shop'.

Thewlis is cast for his Lancastrian vowels and propensity to be misunderstood when he says something deviant. Michael isn't modelled after him. The Thewlis film this most resembles is Mike Leigh's *Naked*, with its series of encounters and perpetual anger. I suspect Kaufman thought of it when casting him.

I could say something about the other characters but that would be a spoiler. Kaufman's return to the status quo is decidedly strange. Undoubtedly, *Anomalisa* is a statement against the homogenisation of culture, of life, of emotion. It is about the search for the different, equated with authenticity. The twist is that it is perhaps we who make the world un-special. We're programmed to process what we experience and perceive it as mundane. We look for the fork against our lover's teeth or the mouth agape whilst eating. If it is our fault that existence seems stifling, what then do we do?



Anomalisa opens in UK cinemas on March 11th

BOOK REVIEWS

Duncan Bowie on libertarian socialists at work

WE DO NOT FEAR ANARCHY – WE INVOKE IT
Robert Graham (AK Press, £17)

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND ANARCHISM
René Berthier (Merlin Press Anarres Editions, £16.95)

These books both examine the role of anarchists within the First International (IWA). Both books are welcome in that they shift attention away from the conflict between Marx and Bakunin to review the different tendencies within the anti-authoritarian tradition within the international, something I tried to cover, if briefly, in my chapter on the libertarian socialist tradition in Chartist's Beyond Blair booklet ten years ago.

Graham has already edited three volumes of anarchist writings, and has written widely on anarchist history and theory as well as writing a blog: <https://robertgraham.wordpress.com/2014/08/02/from-anarchy-to-anarchism/>

His book is the most thorough study I have yet seen on anarchism in the European socialist movement between the 1850's and the late 1880's. The first chapter is especially useful in providing a review of the works of Proudhon, but also covering in considerable detail the writings of other early French anti-authoritarian socialists such as Joseph Dejacque, Anselme Bellegarrigue and Ernest Coeurderoy.

The chapters on the 1864-1872 period examine the different tendencies within the First International with a focus on the French Proudhonists and the French anti-authoritarian socialists led by Cesar de Paepe and Eugene Hins. Some attention is also given to the English federalists such as John Hales. Both Hales and the London German tailor, Georg Eccarius were to reject Marx's centralising approach which tried to turn the London based General Council into a directing central committee. As the International expanded into Italy and Spain, the anti-authoritarian federalists became dominant within the IWA's membership, which is why Marx decided to wind up the organisation, (the intention of the transfer of the General Council to New York in 1872).

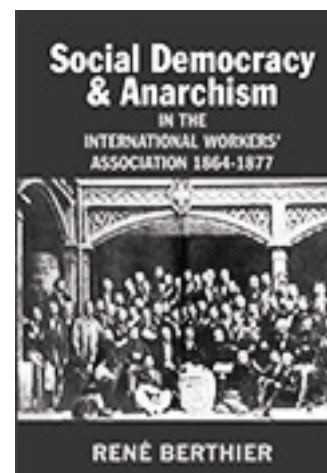
Tracing anti-authoritarianism



The European International was however to survive until 1877 with a series of anti-authoritarian congresses, hosted by the Swiss and Belgian federalists. Cesar de Paepe organised a congress in Ghent in 1877 which sought to bring together the two wings of the original International, and while the German Social Democrats participated, the anarchists led by Brousse (who was later to lead the French municipal socialists or possibilists) Guillaume, Schwitzgubel and Kropotkin moved towards a focus firstly on extra-parliamentary activity and then on propaganda by deed. The German socialists led on the founding of the Second International in 1899, by which time French libertarians such as Benoit Malon and Jules Guesde had adopted social democratic parliamentary approaches.

René Berthier is not a professional historian but a French anarcho-syndicalist activist, though this is not his first historical study as he has written a book on the Russian Revolution of October 1917. The new book was published in French in 2012 and has been translated by Merlin's Anthony Zurbrugg. Berthier's historical span is shorter, focusing on the 1871 to 1877 period. As might perhaps be expected, Berthier sides with Bakunin in the dispute with Marx's coterie.

The first section of the book usefully focuses on the key theoretical disagreements between Marx and Bakunin. Berthier then provides a detailed narrative of the IWA conferences from the 1871 London conference through the series of anti-authoritarian conferences and includes the



Marxist secessionist congress in Geneva in 1873, which many histories ignore. The book provides a detailed analysis of the 1877 Ghent congress and the positions of the different tendencies with it, before examining the collapse of the anti-authoritarian international at Fribourg in 1878.

Berthier appears to welcome this, as he sees the adoption of anarchist communism, as promoted by Kropotkin, by the Jura Federation at La-Chaux-de-Fonds in October 1879, as representing a final breach with social democracy. The anarchists now rejected all forms of organisation. As argued by Kropotkin, they were 'looking for progress through the widest emancipation of individual initiative from the authority of the state and in the limitation of government functions'. Berthier's volume also includes extracts from key anti-authoritarian documents and a chronology.

Both books are highly recommended. Many of the original sources have not previously been available in English, as both authors draw heavily on the collections of IWA material by Freymond and Guillaume, both of which are in French. Many Chartist readers will share the libertarian socialist traditions of the IWA federalists, and some may even have some sympathy with the anarchist tradition developed by Kropotkin and colleagues. Both books move beyond a focus on the competing egos of Marx and Bakunin to examine the struggle over ideas and the important role of internationalists, who were not necessarily bound to either party.

Peter Kenyon on crony capitalism

A QUIET WORD: LOBBYING, CRONY CAPITALISM AND BROKEN POLITICS IN BRITAIN
Tamasin Cave and Andy Rowell (Bodley Head, £20)

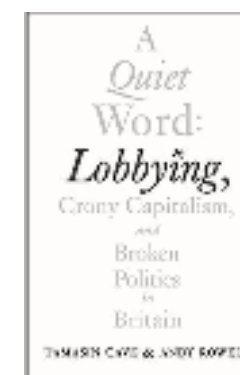
New Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have much to answer for to the British electorate. That includes their collective failure to address the corruption of our political system by professional lobbyists. Authored by Tamasin Cave, director of Spinwatch and her colleague Andy Rowell, this book chronicles the efforts of a £2 billion industry to operate in the shadows. Just in case you are in any doubt about the existence of crony capitalism, they devote an opening chapter to Lobby: Introducing the Influencing Industry.

In the run up to the 2010 General Election, Conservative Party leader David Cameron made a pledge to 'sort it out' con-

cluding: "It is increasingly clear that lobbying in this country is getting out of control. We can't go on like this". Yet, as the authors remind us, 'it has gone on.' Successive chapters detail Access: A Business of Insiders highlighting cosy relationships that help commercial interests shape public policy in their interests rather than those of the electorate, media manipulation, hiding behind third parties, outwitting the opposition, silencing the public, facing down threats, and creating more opportunities to profit. All of which lead the authors to conclude Lobbying will stay in the Shadows.

This is not surprising since the Conservatives won an overall majority in the House of Commons. Even under the former coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, the Tories published legislation to establish a register of lobbyists. The authors describe it as 'a fake'. So

while charities and trade unions are being pilloried by this ideologically driven government for lobbying on behalf of civic society, the profiteers can carry on regardless while the Tories are in power. This well researched account provides valuable insights into another scandal at the heart of our democracy that must be brought to account by the next Labour government.



The new dangerous class

Robbie Scott on marginalisation

PRECARIAT
Guy Standing (Bloomsbury, £12.99)

Guy Standing's *Precariat* is a good starting point for those seeking to understand the new obstacles in the way of what Amartya Sen called positive freedom. Interestingly, Standing's *Precariat* is drawn from a broad spectrum that isn't defined by ethnicity, class or educational attainment. Often characterised by youth, they are united by their marginalisation from mainstream society and the absence of any occupational identity. Their heterogeneity is highlighted as a strength and is a defining feature throughout.

Immigrants, graduates, the working class young are all disposable and find themselves on the same conveyor belt to an uncertain future. Standing brings into sharp focus the declining fortunes of working people whilst highlighting the role governments have played in helping to create harsher working conditions. The precariat is vulnerable to fluctuations in the job market and all the financial instability that goes with it – often working through

agencies on zero hour contracts. They receive the majority of their income through wages rather than rights based state benefits like pensions and are marginalised as a consequence.

A lack of economic, political and cultural rights erodes ideas of citizenship trapping members of the precariat in cycles of insecurity, poverty and decline. When isolated in this way Standing refers to members of the precariat as Denizens. Looser ties with government sets them apart from those who enjoy higher incomes and stronger links with the state. The reluctance of successive UK Governments to cut generous benefits associated with 'silver voters' becomes all the more thought-provoking.

Standing's *Precariat Charter* gives life to the aspirations of those struggling to survive the challenges of a globalised world. However, it would be a mistake to view them as victims. They should be seen as new agents of social change embodied in organisations like Momentum, Occupy Wall Street and 15NOW. Standing discusses how political, civil, social, cultural and most

importantly economic rights are denied to the precariat and considers what type of new politics might best realise ideas pertaining to the 'Good Society'.

Standing argues that the precariat ought to be recognised as a distinct grouping. I did not think he made strong enough efforts to reinforce the idea particularly in light of the fragmented nature of the precariat. Gender, ethnicity and even geography are likely to have a profound impact on the viability of groups to form, articulate a clear set of demands and seek effective representation. Standing suggests a set of actions that ought to be undertaken to bolster the position of the precariat or a citizen's charter. The key pillar of the charter is the idea of a citizen's income payable to all which would increase the life chances and prospects of those at the bottom whilst giving them a sense of security in an economic system now characterised by flux. The book is accessible and will interest anybody interested in welfare reform or shifting work patterns.

BOOK REVIEWS

Game of Thrones

Duncan Bowie on the historical basis of fantasy

WINTER IS COMING
 Carlyne Larrington (I B Tauris, £12.99)

This book is not to be confused with the book of the same title which is Garry Kasparov's critique of Putin's rule in Russia. This book is an academic study of the origins in medieval history of the popular television series *Game of Thrones*. Larrington is a fellow in medieval English literature at St John's College, Oxford. I was late to *Game of Thrones* and ended up watching the box set of the first four series over a few weeks in 4-8 hour sessions which I suppose makes me an addict. For those who have not seen the fifth series, not out until next Spring, be warned that Larrington's study does make reference to some later episodes, for-

tunately pre-warned by 'spoiler alerts'.

The book is a serious academic study, but no doubt one that is going to generate higher royalties than academic books normally generate. Larrington traces the origins of George G R Martin's parallel universe in an impressive knowledge of both European and Asian medieval and renaissance history – Kings's Landing with medieval England and France and the Wars of the Roses; the Wall with Hadrian's wall; the Ironborn with Viking history; Bravos with Venice, the slaver cities with the early Ottoman Empire; Dothraki with the Mongols.

The study is well researched, with Larrington demonstrating a wide reading of medieval European and Norse literature.



The book analyses the political and religious symbolism of the series as well as tracing some of Martin's material to attitudes to power, marriage, sex and gender in medieval periods. I found Larrington's study convincing in demonstrating the extent to which the fantasy of the *Game of Thrones* has a sound historical basis, with even the dragons having a basis in medieval literature, if not in historical fact.

A catalogue of errors

Peter Kenyon on Corbyn's inheritance

FIVE MILLION CONVERSATIONS – HOW LABOUR LOST AN ELECTION AND REDISCOVERED ITS ROOTS
 Iain Watson (Lauth Press, £12.99)

As a BBC Political Correspondent, Iain Watson had direct access to Labour's former leader Ed Miliband, his entourage, friends and foes before, during and after the 2015 General Election.

Watson provides a vivid diary of daily events in the run up to and during the short campaign from 14 March (with the premature disclosure of election promises) until Miliband's resignation on 8 May. This crafted account is cleverly sandwiched between an opening chapter on the election of Jeremy Corbyn declared on 12 September – 'The Accidental Leader' and a detailed 34-page concluding chapter – 'The Aftermath – A Question of Leadership'.

For anyone who is active in the Labour Party, it is painful reading. Hopes endowed in the Leader dashed. Mistakes highlighted that are all too likely to be repeated again. The title itself reveals a profound deceit – there never were five million conversations. But Watson is merely reporting what was said by Miliband: "We have had five million conversations. This will go to the wire." And quite reasonably, Watson

asks: 'As self-proclaimed winners of the 'ground war', how could Labour have got it so wrong?' He uses Labour's wipeout in Scotland to expose the electorally fatal weaknesses in Labour's doorstep campaigning to those of the triumphant SNP – 'Facebook v Foot Weary: Right People, Wrong Conversations'. The SNP's canvassing was more sophisticated than Labour's and started much sooner.

In my experiences, those 'conversations' were voter contacts of which only a tiny proportion could properly be described as conversations. Proper conversations require high grade intelligence and a clear narrative from the leadership. Labour has neither modern means of collecting data about voters' intentions, nor did it have coherent, credible messages for the electorate around which to persuade voters that they should vote Labour. On page after page Watson provides searing examples.

Pulling no punches, Watson offers bullet points to summarise each chapter. The first chapter in the diary section of the campaign is entitled, 'There may be Trouble Ahead: The Election in Microcosm'. 14 March – we are told:

- Ed Miliband reveals his election pledges before the start of the official election campaign

- Labour appears to be missing warning signs of how their opponents will fight that campaign

- The lack of consultation and engagement with some Shadow Cabinet members becomes obvious when not all of them know how many election pledges will be unveiled

- Those around Ed Miliband seem to be in denial about his lack of popularity

In his concluding paragraphs, Watson warns that a ground war, necessary as it may be, is no substitute for 'lacklustre leadership, or a political offer people don't want to purchase'. For a clearer understanding of what that might involve for Corbyn, buy this book, read and inwardly digest. I hope that you have a stronger constitution than the Labour Party hierarchy.



Trevor Fisher on education strategy

THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR SCHOOLS
 Melissa Benn & Janet Downs (Routledge, £12.99)

The print version of an already successful e-book is a welcome dose of sanity in the mad world of education politics. The usual job of a reviewer to assess the value of a work is, at least for a left of centre audience, not needed as the value of the book is well established. Routledge would not have brought it out if there was not a market for it, and it is essential reading to counter the myth that comprehensive education is not successful. But the consensus in the Westminster bubble is not going to change its mind because the facts don't support their anti-comprehensive attitude. Indeed the progressive lobby has become invisible because of systematic machiavellian tactics.

Peter Mortimore makes the essential point in the introduction, writing of the 'frequency with which obviously untrue comments have been disseminated by commentators and repeatedly parroted by politicians and the media'. This refers to a paradigm deeply rooted in the Bubble which is massively resistant to factual evidence and which dates back to the *Black Papers* of the early seventies, which as Richard Pring reminds us constantly, were never properly critiqued and choked out the reality of comprehensive success.

A life well lived

Duncan Bowie on a political memoir

SEEKERS: A TWENTIETH CENTURY LIFE
 Michael Barratt Brown (Spokesman, £18.95)

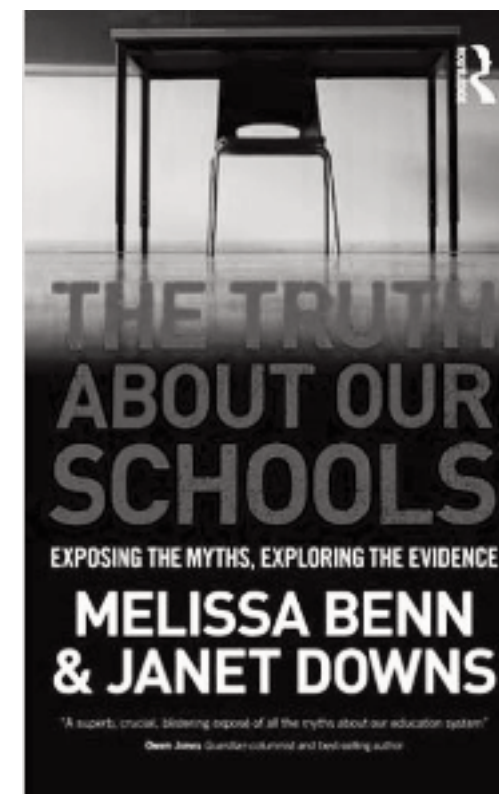
Barratt Brown was active in left politics from the 1930s to the 1990s. His father was principal of Ruskin College, Michael was the founder of Northern College. Barratt Brown was primarily an educationalist, active throughout his life in the workers education movement, but he was also active in the Communist Party, CND and the New Left, as an editor of the *New Left Review*.

He was a political economist and wrote books on African economics and later collaborated with Ken Coates at the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. He

Things get worse. I am writing on February 6th, when the front page of both the *Guardian* and the *Times* headline a report from the *TES* written by Lord Lucas that the state system is now miraculously improved, due to government policy, and it is now better than the independent system. As Lucas is editor of the so-called *Good School Guide*, he is taken for gospel. The *Guardian* education editor, Richard Adams, does not appear to have read his own writer, John Harris, who on February 2nd

wrote a powerful piece about state teachers being driven to breakdown by the system which Lucas extols. It is impossible to run schools without teachers, or finance, and both are in short supply. Whatever Lord Lucas says, a brutal reality is emerging.

Neither the two papers nor the *TES* pointed out that Lucas is a government spokesperson, and part of the Bubble. In this world,



which Machiavelli would have recognised, the facts are off limits. This book provides abundant factual evidence against Bubble Think, and it is essential reading. Alas the core idea that there is a debate taking place, essential to the Local Schools Network that both authors belong to, is mistaken. We are invisible and have to break out of the ghetto into which they have put us.

in the Friends ambulance unit during the Second World War before joining the UN relief organisation in Yugoslavia.

The book is an interesting memoir of a life on the left – sincere but also honest and not self-serving. The book is about his friends as well as his political life – though his wide network of friends was part of his political life. The book is very personal and full of illustrations of friends and acquaintances – from Gandhi and GDH Cole to Tito and Ben Bella and his own daughter's university graduation ceremony. Well worth reading as a reaffirmation of the purpose of a political life.



also contributed to Coates' series of *Renewal* pamphlets criticising New Labour. For much of his life Barratt Brown was active in the Quaker movement, having served

BOOK REVIEWS

Planning for Kosovo

Sheila Osmamovic
on the emergence of a liberation force

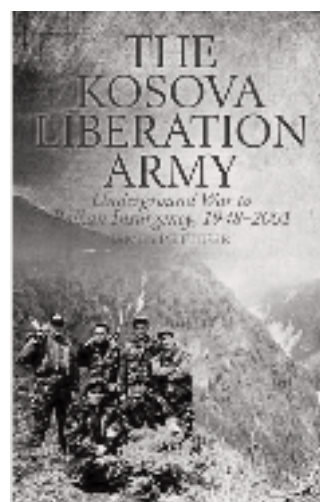
KOSOVA LIBERATION ARMY: UNDERGROUND WAR TO BALKAN INSURGENCY 1948-2001
James Pettifer (Hurst, £15.99)

Pettifer does an excellent job in explaining the birth, subsequent development and military efforts of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). In a detailed manner - at times overwhelmingly fine - the reader is taken back into a history of unfamiliar corners of the Albanian insurgency. Albanian endurance boils down to the lack of national recognition since the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913 and continual struggle for Albanian cultural survival amidst Serbian hegemony.

The book offers a fresh perspective on the nature of the Kosovo war in the sense that it covers a much broader historical perspective of the conflict. Although at times scattered with insufficiently explored examples from the end of Ottoman rule in the nineteenth century, the book very much draws examples from the post World War Two Albanian efforts to accommodate the new Serbian rule under the Yugoslav blanket. The narrative successful-

ly depicts the internal struggle of the mobilisation of the Kosovars around the perpetual dual abyss of Marxism versus Nationalism approaches. In other words, the dichotomy of whether the uprising would take the shape of the social revolution or that of a mere national liberation was a defining feature of the Albanian insurgency. At times the internal struggle was gleefully exploited by Serb intelligence which succeeded in manoeuvring the emigration of the Albanians to distant countries such as United States. These channelled migrations, in turn, were essential in forming the foundation for the secret organisation that would serve as a basis for the emergence of the KLA.

A significant part of Pettifer's analyses is on the role of the Albanian Diaspora in mobilising funds and manpower for the formation of the KLA and the preparation for the war. Pettifer explains that the most substantial help did not come from America as Serbian propaganda claimed. The carefully planned activities, mobilisation and funds came from Switzerland where a majority of masterminds of the



future KLA were diligently working on the realisation of the long-standing dream of liberated Kosova.

Despite careful strategic planning and the military brilliance of the KLA guerrilla warfare, the lack of robust state-building capacity amongst the KLA leadership hindered the fulfilment of the ultimate independence goal. The KLA efforts to achieve full sovereignty were further curtailed by the sophisticated diplomatic mechanisms deployed by the British-led 'international community'. Pettifer's major contribution is to carefully explain the joint conspiracy of the major international players against the

Reviewing and reviving

Mike Davis
on a guide to Labour renewal

CORBYN'S CAMPAIGN
Tom Unterrainer (Ed)
(Spokesman, £7.95)

As the blurb says 'Defying all expectations, Jeremy Corbyn was elected Labour leader with a resounding mandate. His campaign rewrote the rules of British politics by mobilising tens of thousands of supporters both within and outside the Party.' This 148 page book contains essays by activists involved in the campaign for a new socialist Labour Party and a record of a talk given by Corbyn himself. Unterrainer sets two aims: to record how a rank outsider won a huge majority against all odds and secondly to provide debate about the road ahead.

It certainly achieves the first and goes some way to delivery of the second. Ben Sellers in 'JezWeDid' highlights the role of social media in Corbyn's victory stressing that winning in 2020 will need a mass education cam-



paign making policy messages accessible and popular in print and broadcast media and a strong counter narrative 'to the storm coming our way'.

In perhaps the sharpest analysis defeated Derby North MP Chris Williamson shows how the rot in Labour set in with Blair's election enshrining neoliberalism

with its 'private good public bad' ethos. Moving on with Miliband he identifies the problem as 'austerity lite'. Miliband turned the page on Blair but did not follow through. The 2015 manifesto was full of tortured compromises, a confused message and lack of ambition allowing UKIP and the SNP to outflank the party. Instead of taking the Tories to task for 'presiding over a grotesque increase in poverty and inequality' Labour stuck to the line of fiscal credibility and cuts.

Christine Shawcroft untangles Labour's over-centralist rules and poor organisation while Tony Simpson and the editor outline an internationalist course with renewal and empowerment of working people at its heart. Appendices cover Corbyn's economic and housing policies and the case for defence diversification. A must read for activists wanting a place to start the uphill struggle for a new politics.

Marina Prentoulis
on charting Europe away from neo-liberalism

POLITICS IN A TIME OF CRISIS
Pablo Iglesias (Verso, £10.99)

A short introduction of Pablo Iglesias book 'Politics in a Time of Crisis', written by Alexis Tsipras, establishes from the very start the relationship between the two parties, Syriza and Podemos, and beyond that, the importance of fighting the catastrophic politics of neoliberalism and austerity across Europe. The book, the bulk of which was written in 2013, before Podemos became the third political force in Spain, sets out the theoretical and political foundations of the party. As Pablo Iglesias admits, it is not a sustained theoretical expose but rather a glimpse of the Podemos phenomenon.

Today, Iglesias's argument that the economic crisis of 2007-8 was nothing more than the attempt of the world financial system to bailout the banking sector by imposing the burden on the citizens of Europe has been widely accepted by most progressive forces across Europe and the US. The rise of Syriza in Greece, Jeremy Corbyn's election as the leader of the Labour party in Britain, Bernie Sanders' as a serious contender for the Democratic Party in the US, are some of the most notable victories against the dominant neoliberal discourse.

Voting is not sufficient

The recognition that voting is not sufficient to counteract the assault on the people of Europe and the realization that economics is politics (the title of Iglesias' third chapter) resulted in the eruption of indignant movements across Europe and the US. In Spain, cuts to public sector jobs and spending by the Mariano Rajoy (leader of the right wing PP party) government left one quarter of Spanish families living below the poverty line, one quarter of the Spanish people unemployed and led to hundreds of thousand of evictions, a dire situation matched only by Greece.

The politics advocated by Podemos are rooted in these indignant movements of 2011. The later Podemos leadership was originally a group of young academics at Complutense University in Madrid. They were

A future with Podemos



Pablo Iglesias: proposing an assault on neo-liberalism

interested in using the energy of the Indignados movement to challenge the Spanish political establishment, or 'la caste', on the parliamentary terrain. Drawing on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe and the history of left-wing populist governments in South America, 'la caste' concept has been used by Podemos in order to create a dividing line between 'the people' and the corrupt, undemocratic political establishment, the 'them' that Podemos was fighting against.

Popularisation

The popularization of these ideas started as early as 2010 with the TV programmes La Tuerka and, later, Fort Apache. Undermining the ruling ideas and testing their own through the most influential medium of TV, suggests how progressive forces have to engage with the complex and diverse contemporary communications ecology. Although utilizing digital technologies enabled the Indignados to experiment with digital democracy and thousands of Podemos supporters to vote on the organizational and political principles of their party, the break into mainstream media enabled people like Iglesias and Inigo Errejón to address larger audiences.

In January 2014 Podemos was established as a party aiming at social change, a social change that neither PP nor PSOE could deliver. Iglesias gives a convincing account of Spanish politics post-Franco, a democratic transition leading to 'cliquish elitism'

and 'disenchantment' with social change. The consensus established during this period ensured 'Spain's entrance into the European sphere with the lowest possible cost to business and finance'.

Although at the time when the book was written, there was not yet a clear policy platform (not at least one articulated in the book), the references to Gramsci and his 'war of position' or 'chess game' is central in the book's narrative, articulating some important insights on political power. The rule of law is nothing more than the will of the victors and Iglesias through theoretical and popular culture references seeks to set out the process of a counter hegemonic discourse. Although never spoken explicitly but often alluded to, the 'enemy' is global capitalism. With references to David Harvey's Party of Wall Street, the author is trying to show how institutions like the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and political parties and leaders like Angela Merkel, all have one allegiance: to a global capitalist system.

Assault on neo-liberalism

After the December 20th 2015 election we are still waiting for the formation of a progressive alliance between PSOE, Podemos and other political forces in Spain. Iglesias' book becomes highly significant in articulating the counter-hegemonic assault on neo-liberalism that has just begun.

WESTMINSTER VIEW



Karen Buck on the Housing and Planning Bill

Karen Buck is MP for Westminster North

Demolishing affordability

Surely, before the Housing and Planning Bill, now before Parliament, was drafted, Government Ministers sat down with officials and drew up a list of the challenges facing housing policy? The crisis of affordability would have featured on that list, with particular reference to London, where home ownership is plummeting, especially amongst the under-35s, and where rents routinely take up half or more of income.

Attention ought to have been paid to the importance of work incentives and rewarding work, in housing, as was meant to be the case with changes to the tax and benefits system. The strain on Housing Benefit must have been considered. Rising levels of private renting and incomes still below 2008 levels all add pressure onto the HB Bill, bringing that down has been a key objective of 'welfare reform'. Rising home-

lessness, manifested on the streets and in Bed and Breakfast hotels, may not have been a top priority, but it would have made an appearance. Some nodding recognition of the importance of stable, mixed communities may have been made. So, armed with this list, the Housing and Planning Bill was drawn up.

Perhaps the kindest thing that can be said about the Bill is that

whilst it may be the worst piece of housing legislation in modern history it achieves a neat symmetry. It manages to achieve almost the exact opposite of what it is intended to do.

Extending the Right to Buy to the Housing Association sector, funded via enforced sales of high value council housing, creates no new homes, but will further reduce the housing stock for those unable to buy. With ex-council flats changing hands for £500k and more in London, those buying will certainly not be in the same category as those on council waiting lists. Worse, in future developers must provide 'starter

homes' for sale instead of a percentage of new build (admittedly, often an inadequate percentage) for rent. Capped at £250,000 outside London and £450,000 in London, these join other so called 'affordable' schemes which can't be managed on an MP's salary, let alone an average one. Far from helping middle and lower earners, it ensures they are priced out still further.

Back in the social sector, fixed tenancies are ended in favour of fixed term ones, ending security for families, and a 'pay to stay' policy is intended to transform social rents to market ones for households with annual incomes over £30,000 (over £40,000 in London), discouraging tenants

from seeking a pay rise and eventually ensuring that social housing is only a sector for the very poorest. At a stroke (or series of strokes), affordability and work incentives are demolished, communities undermined, security removed, and another boost given to the private rented sector (which will, in turn, add to the cost of Housing Benefit). Higher levels of homelessness are guaranteed, and the housing interests of the seriously well-off prioritised over those on middle and lower incomes.

The election of a Labour Mayor in London would not mean the

end of this most ill-thought out and pernicious piece of legislation. What it gives Londoners is a chance to try a different strategy. London Labour recognises the importance of boosting supply of all tenures; securing a fair share of new development for affordable homes

and buy, ensuring Londoners get first call on a new generation of shared-ownership homes and pays attention to the needs of private renters. These are all vitally important in themselves.

Yet a victory for Sadiq Khan will also make a wider point. It will confirm that housing has at last come to feature as a political and not merely a private story, one which commands the attention of politicians and policy makers. It would send a message that the Housing and Planning Bill is the wrong answer to Britain's growing housing needs and affordability crisis.

That would be a decent start until we can secure a change of government.



Affordable housing: is this what the Tories have in mind?

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